

ISRAEL'S ENEMY WITHIN • ENRON'S SHELL GAME

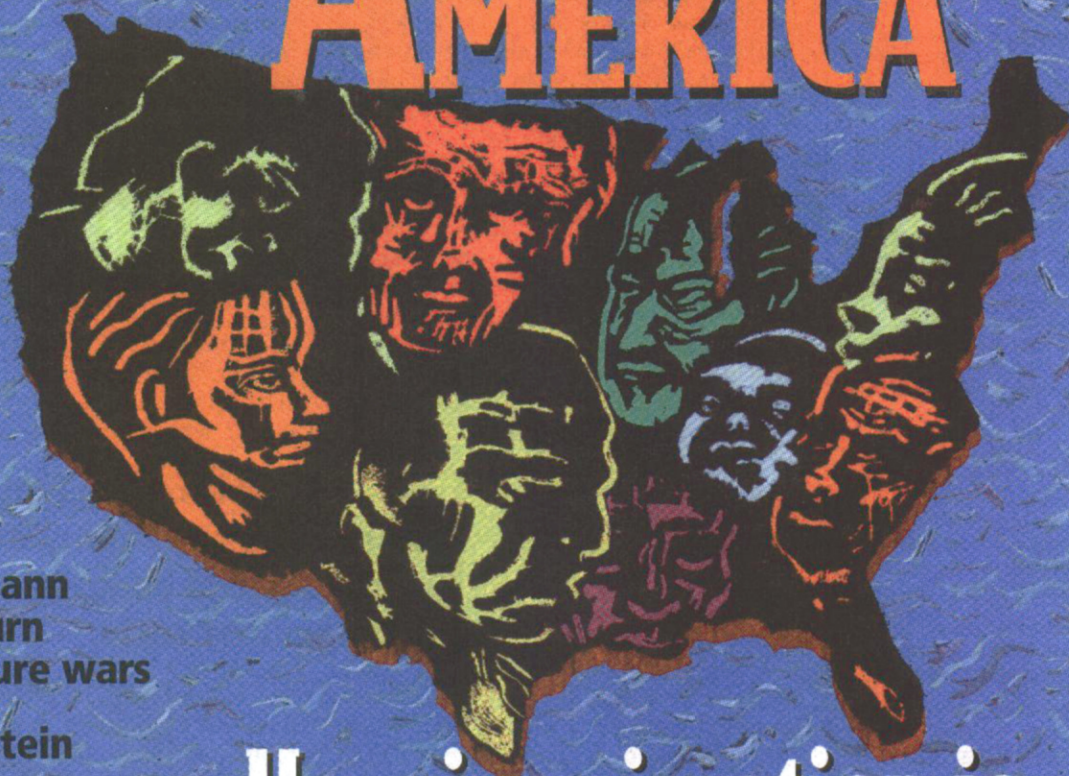
YEAR-END
DOUBLE ISSUE

In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

January 21, 2002

THE NEW AMERICA



PLUS:

Chris Lehmann
on the return
of the culture wars

Ken Silverstein
on the arms
dealer next door

How immigration is transforming our society

G. Pascal Zachary
Hwee Hwee Tan
Rubén G. Rumbaut

David Rieff
Chiori Santiago
Salim Muwakkil



\$2.50

Canada \$3.50
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

getimes.com

"... with liberty and justice for all"

James Weinstein
Founding Editor and Publisher

Editor: Joel Bleifuss
Managing Editor: Craig Aaron
Senior Editors: Patricia Aufderheide, David Moberg, Salim Muwakkil
Culture Editor: Joe Knowles
Associate Editor: Kristie Reilly
Contributing Editors: Terry J. Allen, Bill Boisvert, Susan J. Douglas, Barbara Ehrenreich, Laura Flanders, Annette Fuentes, Juan Gonzalez, David Graeber, Miles Harvey, Paul Hokenos, George Hodak, Doug Ireland, Naomi Klein, Dave Mulcahey, Geov Parrish, Kim Phillips-Fein, Jeffrey St. Clair, Jane Slaughter, Jason Vest, Fred Weir, G. Pascal Zachary
Proofreaders: Alan Kimmel, Norman Wishner
Interns: Lauren Courcy, Jordan Levinson, Carina Stanton, Laura Walsh

Art Director: Jim Rinnert
Associate Art Director: Seamus Holman
Illustrator: Terry LaBan

Publisher: Joel Bleifuss
Associate Publisher: Joshua Rothkopf
Communications/Circulation Director: Luli Buxton
Circulation Manager: Peter Hoyt
Assistant Publisher: Aaron Sarver

In These Times (ISSN 0160-5992) is published biweekly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 26, Nos. 4-5) went to press on December 21 for newsstand sales January 7 to January 21, 2002.

The entire contents of *In These Times* are copyright ©2002 by the Institute for Public Affairs, and may not be reproduced in any manner, either in whole or in part, without permission of the publisher. Copies of *In These Times' contract with the National Writers Union* are available upon request. Contact the union at (212) 254-0279 or <http://www.nwu.org>.

Subscriptions are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). For **subscription questions** and **address changes** call (800) 827-0270.

Editorial correspondence and **letters** should be sent to: 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Phone: (773) 772-0100. Fax: (773) 772-4180. E-mail: itt@inthesetimes.com.

Publisher does not assume liability for **unsolicited manuscripts** or material. Manuscripts unaccompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope will not be returned. **All letters** received by *In These Times* become property of the magazine. We reserve the right to print letters in condensed form.

For back issues and advertising rates, call toll free (888) READ-ITT. Available back issues are \$3 each, \$5 each overseas. Complete issues and volumes of *In These Times* are available from Bell and Howell, Ann Arbor, MI. *In These Times* is indexed in the Alternative Press Index and the Left Index. Newsstand circulation through the IPA International Sales Cooperative at (415) 643-0161, or info@bigtoppubs.com.



Editorial

Market Magic's Empty Shell

If there's any justice, the fall of Enron from miracle "new economy" corporation to bankrupt shell should land quite a few executives in jail. But Enron's demise is not only a tale of corporate hubris, greed and likely criminality. More important, it is a cautionary guide to many of the dominant trends in the American economy.

For the past quarter century, a growing ideological chorus has contended that markets are rational and efficient—therefore good—and any interference, especially by government, is bad. But as Joseph Stiglitz, a winner of this year's Nobel Prize in economics, has argued, if markets are to work perfectly on their own terms, the information available to all participants must be perfect. Since that's never true, a case to intervene in markets can always be made, if only to correct information flaws.

The Enron story is a massive argument for intervention. A gas pipeline company that transformed itself into a maker of markets in energy, water, metals and much more, Enron's executives bought political influence (not only by providing more than \$113,000 to Bush's 2000 campaign) to push deregulation of energy and other markets. Like many U.S. companies, Enron shifted from providing real energy to selling a complex variety of financial "derivatives"—contracts abstracted from some real commodity.

These financial devices are the centerpiece of the new "risk management" game in which complex bets on the future of the economy are balanced against each other to eliminate risk. But real-life risk didn't disappear; it just sneaked up in a new way to bite Enron in the financial butt (as it did in 1998 to the Long Term Capital Management hedge fund).

Markets are always volatile, but big government spending and regulation stabilize them—helping both business and the general public. Free market fundamentalists argued that companies like Enron could provide better stability—and make big bucks. Enron quickly grew to No. 7 in the Fortune 500. It also went global, leading the crusade for privatization and deregulation worldwide through the World Trade Organization.

Like many of its brethren in the hot fields of Internet business and financial services, Enron greatly overstated its profits through a fiendishly complex scheme that included roughly 30 partnerships with privately held firms—many run profitably by Enron executives—that were used to shift debt off Enron's books. The result: a boosted stock price and inflated credit rating. The rah-rah stock "analysts" touted Enron even as it was collapsing.

Worse, Enron's auditor, Arthur Andersen, ignored the shenanigans, its vision apparently clouded by the \$52 million Enron paid it last year in consulting and accounting fees. Meanwhile, top Enron executives made more than \$1 billion over two years selling their overpriced stock while they lied to investors about the condition of the company and pressured lower-level employees to hold Enron stock in their 401(k) pension plans as the company collapsed.

The Enron debacle is an argument for stricter financial disclosure laws, new (and restored) restrictions on banks and auditors playing double roles (like consulting and auditing), tougher corporate

Enron is a perfect example of American-style "crony capitalism" and the social dangers of the risk-management craze.

law enforcement, rigorous regulation of financial derivatives, and new rules to protect employee pension plans. (It's also an argument against privatization of Social Security.) Enron is a perfect example of American-style "crony capitalism," the misguided idiocy of energy deregulation and the social dangers posed by the risk-management craze.

Most of all, it is a reminder of how flawed markets can be—even in the holy sepulcher of deregulation—particularly when information is distorted by both outright fraud and the manic belief in market magic by a herd of willing investors and silent watchdogs. We have seen the end of Enron, but the problems that the company so boldly exemplified live on.

— David Moberg

In These Times

Volume 26, Numbers 4-5 January 21, 2002

www.inthesetimes.com

2 Letters

3 News

Israel's enemy within, shredding the ABM treaty, broken promises in Indian country, Mumia Abu-Jamal leaves Death Row and Massey Coal's bad-neighbor policy.

6 Appall-o-Meter By Dave Mulcahey

9 In Person By Ben Winters

Phil Radford: Last call.

10 Viewpoint By Matthew Jardine

Days of infamy and memory.

11 Back Talk By Susan J. Douglas

The liberal media strike again.

Features

12 Liberty on the Defensive

By Doug Ireland

The definition of "terrorist" has drifted far from ground zero.

14 Operation Infinite Jest

By Chris Lehmann

The return of the culture wars.

18 The Arms Dealer Next Door

By Ken Silverstein

The Angolan war's connection to suburban Arizona.

22 The New America

By G. Pascal Zachary, David Rieff, Chiori Santiago, Hwee Hwee Tan, Rubén Rumbaut and Salim Muwakkil

How immigration is transforming our society.

28 Where the Sun Never Sets

By J.W. Mason

BOOKS: *Empire's* new clothes.

30 The Empty Theater

By Heather McCabe

BOOKS: Joan Didion vs. the political class.

33 Terrible Beauty

By Ben Ehrenreich

BOOKS: *The Complete Works of Isaac Babel*.

35 Ghost World

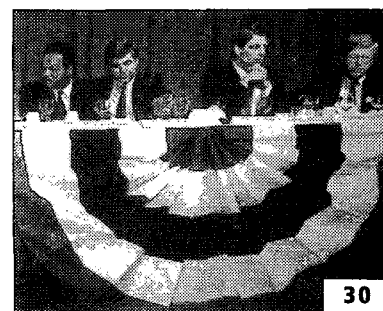
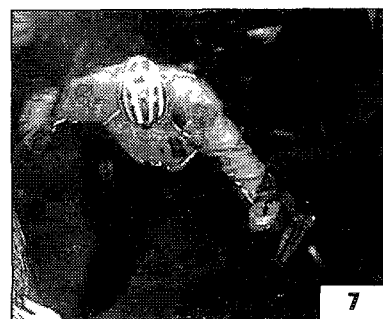
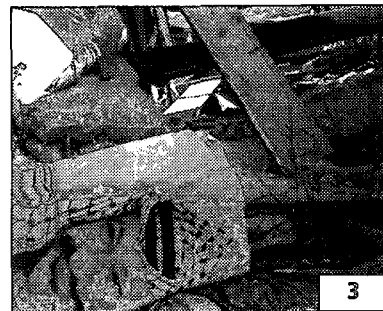
By Julien Lapointe

FILM: *The Devil's Backbone* of the Spanish Civil War.

38 The Great Game

By Naomi Klein

Let's review the tape.



Cover illustration: Ryan Inzana

Letters

Blind Eye

I am amazed that the U.S. government has managed to completely ignore the lessons being learned in Europe regarding drug policy ("Drug War Retreat," January 7). It seems as though our legislators' excuse for the continuation of the drug war despite its obvious failure is that "we don't know a better way." Yet look at Europe—the Netherlands especially—and see that they are experiencing lower rates of addiction and abuse than the United States. Why do we cast such a blind eye?

Alissa Huskey
Paramount, California



Teaching Tolerance?

I want to voice my strong objections to James Akins' article "Why Do They Hate Us?" (December 24). I am originally from the Netherlands, a European country that invented tolerance.

No Islamic country is tolerant of independent thought whatsoever—ask Salman Rushdie. Their women are veiled; in many Arab countries they're not allowed to drive; some are forced to undergo clitorectomies. In Muslim countries, you still find slavery and harems.

I for one am very proud of the West, which has given the world all the science and technological advances, as compared to Islamic nations that have given us exactly nothing. Don't be so damned blind. Their hatred is the expression of their intolerance.

Jitske Hart
Spokane, Washington

Between Readers

My oh my, such heat is being created without any light on the issue of the sanctions against Iraq and the hundreds of thousands of human beings who have died as a direct result ("Letters," December 24).

The reality is that Saddam Hussein is still in power because Bush the Elder was told by the oil-exporting nations in that region

not to finish the job for fear of a huge anti-American backlash.

Nevertheless, even with Hussein in power, his military might has been exposed as vastly inferior to America's. Knowing this, why don't we simply lift the sanctions, place 100,000 U.N. and allied troops on the ground, and provide the medicine and water purification and sewage disposal equipment directly to the people while using Iraq's oil exports to fund the operation?

As for Hussein, a simple warning should suffice that this program is going to be put in place and that any interference will be considered a renewed act of war.

John Cannon
Olancho, California

I fear I may exacerbate the dyspepsia of letter writers Joe Willingham and Howard Park, both of whom excoriate *In These Times* for criticizing certain U.S. policies.

I mean no harm when I point out to you, Mr. Willingham, that when the United States destroyed Iraq's water purification system, the United States attacked civilians, exposing them to disease and

death. To condemn this act is not to own, as you claim, "a sick, poisonous hatred of the United States, its people, its culture, its political system." Instead it is to demand ethical actions of our leaders.

And, Mr. Park, when you deny that the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis are attributable to U.S. policy, you con-

Winter Break

In These Times is taking a two-week holiday vacation following publication of this double issue. The next issue, dated February 18, will be sent out to subscribers on January 22.

tradict our former secretary of state, whose explanation of the carnage—that it was a high price but worth paying (whatever that means)—at least does not shirk responsibility. It is not un-American to care about people who are not American.

Roger Plumskey
Johnsonburg, Pennsylvania

I am sorry to see these attacks on *In These Times*. People are truly brainwashed. I remember Germans after World War II saying they never heard of atrocities against the Jews or concentration camps. In the United States, we live in a similar state of myth. I am thankful for your courage to tell us what is true—and available in the foreign press.

Elizabeth Morrissett
Boulder, Colorado

Please send letters to:

IN THESE TIMES
2040 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Chicago, IL 60647
Or e-mail: itt@inthesetimes.com
Please keep your letter short and include your address and daytime phone number.

Terry LaBan



The Enemy Within

Israel's gravest danger is not the Palestinians

By Neve Gordon

JERUSALEM—Ariel Sharon appears determined to wreak havoc on the Palestinian Authority. Events in December suggest that the Israeli prime minister's strategy may be to unseat Yasser Arafat in the hope of precipitating an inner Palestinian conflict, perhaps even a civil war. Israel, so the twisted logic goes, can then help set up a puppet government while changing the West Bank's territorial demarcation—the Lebanon debacle revisited.

"For Israel, September 11 was a Hanukkah Miracle," Israeli political and security officials recently told the newspaper *Ha'aretz*. Thousands of American fatalities are considered a godsend—in this cynical world—simply because their deaths helped shift international pressure from Israel onto the Palestinians, while allowing the Israeli government to pursue its regional objectives unobstructed. And indeed, in the past months, the United States has unflinchingly supported all of Israel's actions.

A series of deadly suicide attacks inside Israel by Hamas and Islamic Jihad helped Sharon receive a green light to carry out his plans. Returning on December 9, he convened a cabinet meeting at which the Palestinian Authority was designated an entity supporting terrorism. F-16 jets began bombing Arafat's offices in Gaza and destroying the two helicopters he uses for transportation even before the meeting concluded. Other Palestinian Authority structures were attacked in Bethlehem, Nablus and Ramallah, including key state institutions. Not even a murmur of protest was heard from the Bush administration.

On the contrary, on the following day Arafat was handed a list of the "33 Most Wanted" leading militants from Hamas and Islamic Jihad. He was asked by both Israel and U.S. envoy



DAVID SILVERMAN/GETTY IMAGES

A portrait of Yasser Arafat lies among the ruins of a Palestinian radio and television station after it was torn down by the Israeli army.

Anthony Zinni to arrest them immediately and to shut down all Hamas and Islamic Jihad offices. As arrests were underway, a failed Israeli attempt to assassinate Islamic Jihad activist Mohammed Ayoub Sidr in Hebron killed two Palestinian children. Arafat's protests that Sidr was not on the "wanted" list and that Israel cannot expect him to effectively crack down on Hamas and Islamic Jihad while it continues its assassinations were conveniently ignored.

The bloodshed continued. On December 10, a Palestinian attack on a bus left 10 Israelis dead and many more wounded. The Israeli cabinet convened again, this time stating that the Palestinian Authority was solely responsible for the attack and that Arafat had become an "irrelevant figure." On December 13, Sharon directed the military to mount an all-out assault on the Palestinian Authority. Altogether, in the first two weeks of December, 52 Palestinians and 34 Israelis were killed, 16 of them minors.

As the cycle of violence continues, what remains of the Israeli political left has been trying to mount some kind of viable opposition. Weekly protests in front of the prime minister's house, scores of soldiers refusing to serve in the occupied territories, and hundreds of people breaking the mili-

tary siege by transferring basic foodstuffs to Palestinian villages—these are just a few of the activities taking place on a regular basis. They have not, however, managed to challenge the hegemonic spirit of war.

Israel's gravest danger today is not the Palestinian Authority, or even Hamas and Islamic Jihad, but the one it faces from within. During the past year, peace activists have been "invited" to meetings with the secret service, where they are "warned" about their activities. The secret service routinely intercepts the e-mails of peace groups, and often obstructs solidarity meetings or protests in the West Bank by declaring whole regions "closed military zones." For months, the Gaza Strip has been totally closed off to Israelis from the peace camp—including members of the Israeli parliament, the Knesset—and only Jewish settlers, journalists and soldiers can now enter the region. The security forces' ongoing attempts to frighten activists have surely affected the left, but their attack on civil liberties is only one manifestation of much broader social processes taking place within Israel.

Israeli intellectuals who criticize the government are often attacked, not only by the establishment inside Israel, but by its international proxies. *Middle East Quarterly* recently published an article

titled "Israel's Academic Extremists." Written by "a watchdog team of researchers keeping an eye on Israel's universities"—the actual author is not mentioned—the article goes after 20 Israeli professors (including this one) using lies and half-truths to defame and blacklist them.

Worse is the blatant racism and hatred of the "other" that pervades every aspect of Israeli political discourse these days. Jewish cabinet ministers repeatedly refer to the Arab Knesset members as a fifth column of Arafat's agents and collaborators. In the past year, there has been a concerted effort to delegitimize them; six out of the 10 Arab Knesset members from opposition parties have undergone police investigations for "anti-Israeli" statements made during political speeches, while the immunity of one has already been stripped.

Simultaneously, Israel's public radio and television have prevented Arab leaders from voicing their grievances by ceasing to interview them and, in this way, have intensified the alienation felt by their constituency, which comprises a fifth of Israel's citizenry.

Adopting the nationalistic refrain, the Israeli media, which were once known for their critical edge, now silence all opposition, broadcasting almost solely those views conforming to the official line. TV crews pass by as if the peace groups—standing at peace rallies in front of government offices, chanting anti-war slogans—were thin air. By rendering the peace camp invisible to the public at large, the Israeli media helps make it powerless.

But the peace camp also bears some responsibility, since it has not adapted its strategies to the new situation. The time has come to modify its methods of protest, shifting its strategy from mere opposition to nonviolent resistance. Only widespread civil disobedience can bring an end to the dreadful cycle of violence and destruction. It is up to the left to do everything possible so that years from now people won't ask (as we wonder about other times and places) how it was that a whole population didn't realize what was happening. ■

Neve Gordon teaches politics at Ben-Gurion University in Israel and can be reached at ngordon@bgumail.bgu.ac.il.

Treaty's End

Bush unilaterally junks the ABM accord

By Jeffrey St. Clair

It may be no accident that the Bush administration timed the release of the Osama bin Laden videotape on December 13 to coincide with the announcement later that day to unilaterally junk the once sacrosanct Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty, the first abrogation of an arms control treaty since the end of World War II.

Of course, Bush's desire to withdraw from the arms accord and move forward with his Star Wars scheme was an open secret. Signed in Moscow in May 1972, for the past 30 years the ABM treaty has served as a hallmark of arms control measures, limiting the development of a ballistic missile system that would give one superpower a decisive nuclear advantage over the rest of the world.

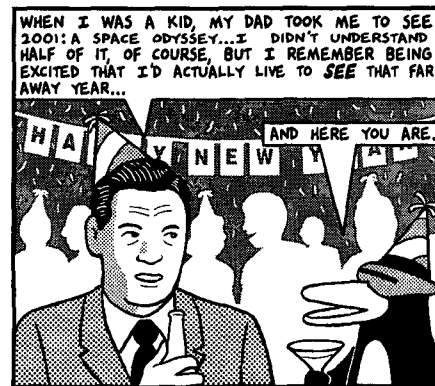
But in the nonstop spasm of coverage of the war in Afghanistan, the media gave the withdrawal scant attention, despite the fact that these nuclear machinations may have much more dire consequences in the long run than the war on terror. Indeed, the retreat from the ABM treaty is just the latest act of unilateral intransigence by the Bush team.

In recent months, the United States has single-handedly brought negotiations on the Biological Weapons Convention to a halt; refused to reconsider the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and boycotted the CTBT review conference in New York; rejected the International Criminal Court; walked away from the Convention on the Prohibition of Landmines; eviscerated the U.N. conference on small arms; and thumbed its nose at the Kyoto accord on global warming.

Even when Russian President Vladimir Putin ventured to the ranch in Crawford, Texas for a back-slapping pow-wow with Bush in November, the emphasis of the press coverage was on the cozy new relationship between the two leaders, eliding Putin's persistent

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, AT LEAST YOU'RE NOT WEARING A UNISEX LEOTARD.

warnings that any move by the United States to abrogate the ABM treaty risked jump-starting a new nuclear arms race. Similar cautionary missives have been regularly sent out by the other nuclear states, including China, England and France. But the Bush team simply shrugs their shoulders at international critics. With the early success of the war in Afghanistan, the need to court a multinational coalition is over.

In the end, the Russian response was curiously muted when Bush finally made the announcement that the United States would abandon the treaty. Why? A top Bush official told the *New York Times*, "It's not like Putin is going home empty handed." The implication is that the pullback from the ABM treaty is only the beginning of a move to unravel other arms agreements, such as START II. "Russia may now withdraw from the START II treaty, freeing itself from the ban on the deployment of missiles with multiple warheads," Ret. Lt. Gen. Vasily Lata, the former deputy chief of Russia's Strategic Missile Forces,

told the *Moscow Times*. "It would serve Russia's security interests well."

Under START II, signed in 1993, both countries agreed to cut in half the 6,000 warheads each was allowed under START I. By abandoning START II, Russia could transform its single-warhead Topol-M missiles into multiple warhead weapons, packing three nukes into each missile.

Even though the trashing of the ABM treaty has been near the top of the Pentagon's agenda since his inauguration, Bush cloaked his move in language that invoked the events of September 11. "I have concluded that the ABM treaty hinders our government's ability to develop ways to protect our people from future terrorist or rogue-state missile attacks," he said. Typically, the president refused to answer any questions from the press about the decision.

One would have thought that the September 11 attacks, where box-cutter knives were used to transform commercial aircraft into flying bombs, would have ended all talk about the efficacy of

a missile defense system—no matter how many billions are spent on it—to counter threats from "rogue nations" or "terrorists." It is a measure of the current Bush allure that the president has been able to move with barely a whisper of protest to defend against a ballistic missile threat that doesn't exist.

On the very day the Bush administration announced its plans to pull out of the ABM treaty, the Pentagon conducted another test of its Star Wars system. It ended in spectacular failure, with an interceptor missile veering wildly off-course before it was destroyed. Of course, each failure—and there have been many—is an excuse for yet another test and a new round of contracts with defense firms. And here we arrive at the crux of the matter. At \$60 billion, Bush's scheme represents the biggest Pentagon gravy train to come along in decades. And this administration has let it be known that it won't allow any treaty, no matter how venerable, to stand in the way of that big a feast at the public trough. ■

MINI-MINI SHORT

Narco News Beats Banamex

In December, the New York Supreme Court threw out a libel suit against the online newsletter *Narco News*, ruling that the Bank of Mexico did not have sufficient evidence to prove the "malicious intent" required to prosecute, and that the site, Narconews.com, was entitled to the same First Amendment protections afforded all print media. The case was the first in which an online publication had been charged with libel; the ruling virtually ensures First Amendment protections for all online journalism.

"This ... decision is landmark," Al Giordano, editor and publisher of *Narco News*, told *In These Times* in an interview via e-mail. "We not only beat back the billionaire attack, but also made good law in the process. I must say, I'm uncharacteristically satisfied. ... Hopefully our having gone through it will help deter other corrupt corporate interests from attempting the same thing."

There was some question whether the case, which involved a Mexican bank and journalists working in Mexico—and a Web server located in Maryland—should have been tried in a U.S. court at all. To have heard the case, the Electronic Frontier Foundation said in a friend of the court brief, would have allowed "foreign plaintiffs to forum-shop abusively" and chilled freedom of speech on the Internet.

Writing from an "undisclosed location" in Bolivia, Giordano has built a reputation for hard-hitting investigative reports on the drug war. Banamex sued over a series of 1997 reports that bank President Roberto Hernandez was involved in drug trafficking (see "Chill Factor," August 20, 2001).

McCarthyism Returns

In late November, Colorado Rep. Scott McInnis, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health, sent a letter to mainstream environmental groups demanding that they denounce the methods of the Earth Liberation Front, a radical environmental group known for violent destruction of property.

"It is justified to ask every legitimate organization in this country to join the coalition that we are putting together to speak out as a unified voice, to speak out against acts of terror," he told the House on November 27. McInnis said the group's tactics make it equivalent to those who perpetrated the attacks of September 11.

The letter, signed by six Republican members of the House, was sent to the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, Earthjustice, the League of Conservation Voters, the National Wildlife Federation and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Many of the groups scoffed at the letter. "We told Mr. McInnis that we had been denouncing violence since long before he knew it was happening," says Carl Pope, executive director of the Sierra Club.

But when the environmental law group Earthjustice ignored the request, McInnis' office called to "remind" them of the letter's December 1 deadline. "We kind of thought it was silly," spokesman Brian Smith says, "and that these guys probably had more important things to be doing than hassling environmental groups."

—Kristie Reilly

Broken Trust

Washington gives Indians the runaround—again

By Jeff Shaw

For more than a century, the federal government has been in charge of trust fund accounts for American Indian people. And for more than a century, the federal government has developed a startling record of mismanagement and incompetence, costing impoverished individuals and tribes billions of dollars and a shot at a better life.

Now, Interior Secretary Gale Norton and Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Neal McCaleb face federal contempt charges alleging they misled the court on trust fund management. This marks the second time in two years that high-level government officials have been charged with lying to a U.S. District Court judge about gross mismanagement of American Indian trust

accounts. Previously, Clinton-era officials, including then Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, were brought up on contempt charges for similar obstructionism.

Tribes estimate that about 500,000 American Indians are owed a total of more than \$10 billion as a result of the mismanagement. Trust fund assets come from a variety of sources, but most are royalties from natural resource extraction such as mining and grazing on Indian lands. The federal government is being accused of elementary accounting errors, failure to reconcile even a single individual account, and attempting to avoid responsibility for the missing money.

At a meeting of the National Congress of American Indians in Spokane, Washington in late November, Jewell James of Lummi Nation reminded delegates that the BIA has been called in front of Congress for misappropriation of Indian funds several times since the trust system was established in 1887. "One hundred and ten years later, the BIA's back in front of Congress for the same damn charge," James said. "This is a crisis for Indian

Country because, for 110 years, nobody heard us. We demand consultation."

Without binding and good-faith consultation efforts, tribal governments inevitably get the short end of the stick. A prime recent example is Norton's "solution" to trust fund mismanagement. Instead of requiring Interior to take responsibility for problems with Indian trust funds, Norton has created a new entity—the Bureau of Indian Trust Asset Management, or BITAM—independent of her department. The creation of the bureau is in open defiance of tribal leaders' wishes. Tribal officials object that the new agency will just serve as a smokescreen to avoid accountability for the missing money; worse, it reflects an abandonment of the federal commitment to native people that was codified in treaties long ago.

Ross Swimmer, Reagan's BIA head, has been assigned by Norton to lead the transition toward the new BITAM. Swimmer, a former leader of the Cherokee Nation, has advocated privatizing the entire trust system—which lends credence to critics' claims that cur-

Campus Radicals 5.4

When engaging today's college students in life's big questions, you'd better watch what you say. Janis Besler Heaphy, publisher of the *Sacramento Bee*, had been invited by California State University at Sacramento to deliver the mid-year commencement address to its graduating class. In lieu of the sunny platitudes these valedictories usually call for, Heaphy thought she might deliver more timely reflections. Big mistake.

Heaphy reminded the graduates of their "obligation to live and uphold America's values and ideals." She then questioned—Socratically, mind you—whether the Bush administration's vigorous homeland security policies, such as infringing attorney-client confidentiality, promoting racial profiling, and proposing military tribunals for terrorists, might not represent some turn for the worse for our nation's cherished civil liberties.

That's when the audience of 17,000 became restive. People started shouting, clapping and stamping their feet, according to

The Associated Press, stopping Heaphy in her tracks. After five minutes, university President Don Gerth succeeded in quelling the outbursts. But as soon as Heaphy started speaking again, she was again drowned out by heckling. "It is a day I will never forget," Gerth said. "I am not proud of it."

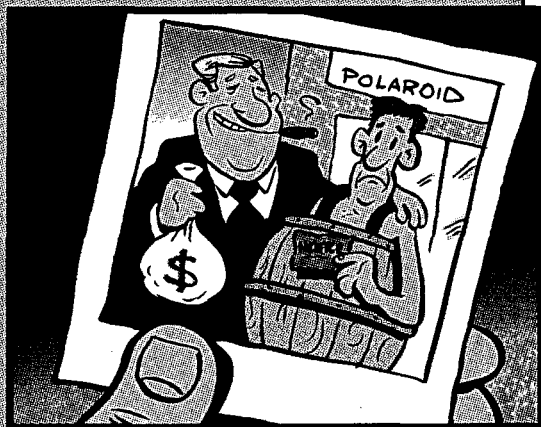
Some students agreed, albeit for different reasons. "Her speech was highly inappropriate for a commencement," one aggrieved graduate complained on Matt Drudge's Web site. "As graduating students, we expected something that was motivational."

The Wages of Downside 7.1

They're not quite in Enron's league, but executives at the now bankrupt Polaroid Corp. are plenty greedy. In October, the company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection from nearly \$1 billion in debt. Before they did,

Polaroid honchos laid off more than a third of its almost 9,000 employees and took away health care benefits from its retirees. However, according to Reuters, Polaroid lawyers have filed a motion in bankruptcy court for \$19 million in incentives and bonuses for some 45 company executives. The motion explains that Polaroid will likely be "unable to attract new employees" and that its "current key employees are irreplaceable."

—Dave Mulcahey



TERRY LABAN



APPALL-O-METER

rent policies are aimed at dismantling federal trust responsibility altogether.

Despite the federal government's awful record managing tribal assets, abdicating federal control over a crucial trust responsibility could be a far more ignominious act. Gregg Bourland, chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation, called the plan "a gutting" of the BIA's essential functions, comparing it to "Taking a bowl full of rotten apples, creating a brand new bowl, and then filling the bowl with the same old rotten apples."

At the meeting in Spokane, dozens of tribal leaders immediately rallied to oppose the new plan. Chairman Tex Hall of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation called Norton "the Grinch who stole consultation." After McCaleb's address to the delegates, Hall asked for all tribal leaders in the room who opposed the new proposal to stand up. Nearly the entire room stood.

On December 4, a court-appointed special master urged a federal judge to take over management of the \$500 million-per-year trust fund. This mirrored a demand that lawyers for the Native American Rights Fund made in October: that U.S. District Court Judge Royce Lamberth, who presides over the tribal trust litigation, appoint an independent receiver to manage the accounts. This receivership management team, assembled at government expense, would have the sole responsibility of living up to the obligation that has been broken so many times before. If the present course continues, however, accountability for Indian trust assets may evaporate entirely. ■

Reversal of Fortune?

Mumia's death sentence is overturned, for now

By Dave Lindorff

PHILADELPHIA—After surviving two decades on Pennsylvania's Death Row, journalist and former Black Panther activist Mumia Abu-Jamal had his death sentence voided on December 19. The ruling was based on a narrow issue involving faulty instructions to

the jury by the judge and in the jury verdict form at Abu-Jamal's 1982 trial, which federal Judge William Yohn said might have incorrectly misled the panel.

Judge Yohn rejected all arguments to overturn Abu-Jamal's first-degree murder conviction. Prosecutors have 180 days to file a motion for a new sentencing hearing before a new jury, which could reimpose a death sentence. If no such hearing is held, he will automatically be sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole.

With the death sentence lifted, the man who was convicted in the 1981 slaying of Philadelphia Police Officer Daniel Faulkner will be moved from the "super-max" prison where he has spent the bulk of his adult life in near solitary confinement into a regular prison.

Both Abu-Jamal's attorneys and Lynne Abraham, Philadelphia's District Attorney, say they will appeal the decision. Hugh Burns, the prosecutor handling the case, argues that the jury instruction issue cited by Yohn should have been raised by Abu-Jamal in his first appeal to the state's high court in 1989, and that in raising it later, in 1995, he was "too late."

Abu-Jamal, meanwhile, will ask the Third Circuit Court of Appeals to overturn Yohn's rejection of the 19 constitutional complaints his lawyers raised concerning his conviction. He is also asking the Appeals Court to order Yohn to consider new evidence and witnesses discovered by his attorneys, Eliot Grossman and Marlene Kamish. Those witnesses include a controversial figure, Arnold Beverly, who claims it was he, and not Abu-Jamal, who killed Faulkner.

No date has been set for the federal appeals court to consider the case, and it could take some time before it is heard. If there were a new sentencing trial, one hope for Abu-Jamal—who continues to maintain his innocence—is that he could, at the discretion of the judge, introduce new evidence to raise "residual doubt" in the minds of jurors concerning his actual guilt. Leonard Weinglass and Daniel Williams (both dumped by Abu-Jamal last spring after Williams



Police beat protesters at a legally permitted Free Mumia march in Philadelphia on December 8. Four protesters were hospitalized; 6 face felony charges.

published a book about the case) say it was always their hope that, if they failed to overturn his conviction, a new sentencing hearing might enable them at least to introduce new evidence of their client's innocence.

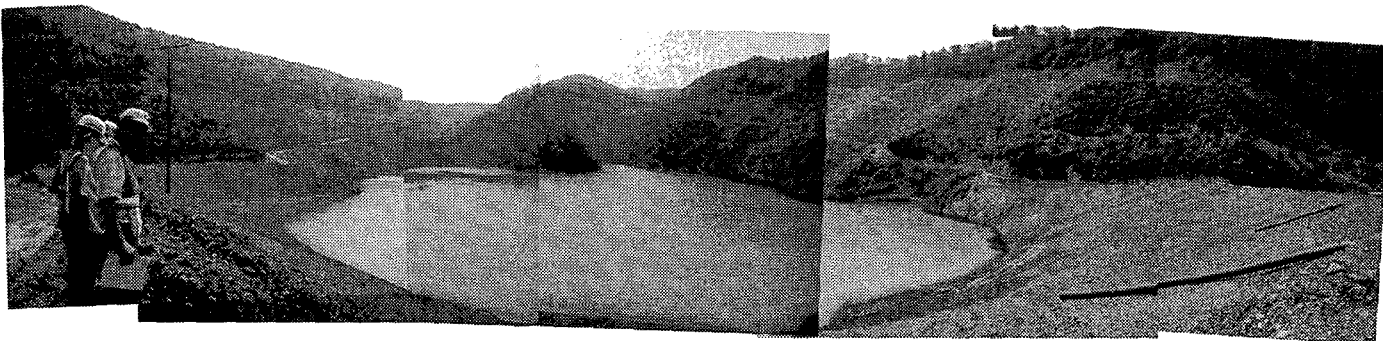
The Third Circuit Court of Appeals could reverse Judge Yohn or send the case back to him on the issue of whether the prosecution improperly excused jurors in 1982 on grounds of their race. While Yohn denied that claim, it is the one issue he certified to the appeals court, meaning that he felt there were grounds to reconsider it.

The most likely outcome for Abu-Jamal at this point, though, is that he will never get out of prison. This grim prospect angers those who have been demanding his freedom. But given Abu-Jamal's charisma and journalistic gifts, the much greater access to the outside world he will gain as an ordinary prisoner in the state system is sure to infuriate those others—including the police and most of the state's legal and political establishment—who have been trying to silence him.

The ruling is being seen as a mixed blessing by Abu-Jamal supporters. Says Pam Africa, a leader of International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, "Trading Mumia from Death Row to life in prison is not acceptable." ■

REVOLUTIONARY LYNNE PHILADELPHIA INC

VIVIAN STOCKMAN/OWEC



A coal waste pit at a Massey Energy subsidiary.

Coal Dust-up

Massey Energy, Inc. targeted by labor and greens

By Ken Ward Jr.

CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA—Citizen and labor groups are targeting Massey Energy Inc., one of Appalachia's largest and most renegade coal operators, for a series of environmental violations and workplace fatalities.

Since a bitter strike in 1986, Massey has been a sworn enemy of the United Mine Workers of America, and, in the past year, labor and environmental groups have formed a rare coalition against the company. The two have held joint protests outside Massey's local corporate office and filled hearing rooms when state officials considered shutting the company down.

Massey has repeatedly spilled mine waste into southern West Virginia streams, leveled thousands of acres with "mountaintop removal" mining, and in October 2000 allowed a coal waste dam in Eastern Kentucky to spill millions of gallons of waste into nearby streams. Conservationists called that spill one of the worst environmental disasters ever in the eastern United States (see "Black Tide," December 25, 2000).

In recent years, the UMWA, which includes only 150 of Massey's more than 3,600 workers, has lost several efforts to organize large Massey operations. But that hasn't stopped the union's fight against the company. In July, the UMWA issued a report that said Massey has the worst safety record among U.S. coal producers. UMWA officials charged that Massey uses a web of con-

tract companies to hide fatal accidents and other safety lapses. "Massey's continued arrogance demonstrates a callous disregard toward the environment, the safety of its workers and the well-being of local residents," says Mineworkers president Cecil Roberts Jr.

UMWA researchers found that in the five-year period from January 1996 to December 2000, Massey workers reported 429 accidents severe enough that workers lost time from work, and Massey contractors reported 378. UMWA officials also reported a steady increase in the number of contractor and worker lost-time accidents at Massey mine sites over the past four years, according to federal Mine Safety and Health Administration data. "Obviously, these are alarming numbers," Roberts says. "This company's record of death and injury cannot be allowed to continue."

UMWA officials called for a federal investigation of Massey's safety problems, but the MSHA, charged with protecting the nation's miners, has announced no such probe. On December 19, MSHA did reach an agreement with Massey to provide additional safety training for the company's mine supervisors. But that agreement mirrors a June 1996 plan to screen Massey contractors for poor safety records, a plan that seems to have done little to improve safety at Massey operations.

Massey itself has simply declined to answer questions about its safety record. On its Web site, the company insists that "every Massey energy operation must pass rigorous safety audits and maintain an active safety culture. ... We rate ourselves against the toughest safety standards in the industry."

If Massey disregards worker safety, the company does little better with environmental protection. In September 2000, the Environmental Protection Agency levied fines and reached a settlement with the company over a series of "blackwater" spills, where water and coal waste from processing plants poured into streams at Massey operations in southern West Virginia. But the spills have continued.

Perhaps the best example of Massey's environmental record, though, is the October 2000 disaster in eastern Kentucky, which caused more than 250 million gallons of a thick, gooey coal sludge to be poured into nearby yards and homes. The mess eventually ended up in the Tug Fork of the Big Sandy River, which empties into the Ohio. Massey had caused a smaller, similar spill in 1994, but the MSHA and other regulatory agencies did nothing about it.

In response, environmentalists have protested new permits for Massey operations to expand their strip-mining. A regional group, the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, has organized public protests. A local group, Coal River Mountain Watch, has intervened in several state regulatory cases, trying to hold Massey's feet to the fire.

But coal remains king in West Virginia, where industry officials exercise much control over the state's lawmakers and regulators and contribute heavily to state political campaigns. Under Republican Gov. Cecil Underwood, state inspectors took a hands-off attitude toward Massey: Company executives were major contributors to Underwood's 1996 election fund, and to his re-election campaign effort last year.

Underwood lost that race to former Rep. Bob Wise, a Democrat who promised stronger environmental enforcement as part of his campaign. Wise's inspectors have threatened to revoke Massey permits, which could block the company from opening new mines anywhere in the country. Appeals of those enforcement actions are ongoing, and activists now worry that Wise, who has been touting the

role of West Virginia coal in a national energy policy, will back down. After the election, coal companies contributed \$120,000 to Wise's inaugural celebration fund, about 20 percent of the cost of the festivities, according to a recent report from the Peoples' Election Reform Coalition.

Last fall, Massey aired radio and television commercials during West Virginia University football games to

promote its image as a "good neighbor" in Appalachian communities.

Activists say the company's records show those ads to be a sham. "Massey Energy's 'good neighbor' campaign has proven repeatedly to be a lie," says Laura Forman of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition. "Good neighbors don't lie, cheat and litigate their way out of bearing the responsibility for the consequences of their actions." ■

Last Call

By Ben Winters

Introducing one of America's champions of the environmental movement, as it relates to beer: "Global warming will affect everything in your life," proclaims Phil Radford, a jovial 25-year-old with a goatee and a head shaved as clean as a clear-cut forest. "It might even kill beer."

Thus begins a long and well-researched discourse on the subject, which Radford refers to, half-jokingly, as his Save the Ales campaign. Radford is a smart guy, a serious environmentalist—but he knows that there is a large class of people who might never be convinced to care about melting polar ice caps. Hence, the Save the Ales campaign.

"All the hops that are grown in the United States for microbrews, or the bulk of them, are grown in the Northwest: Washington, Oregon and Idaho," Radford says. "Every three degrees that the temperature warms, these eco-systems will all shift north in latitude by one to two hundred miles. And there's all these Wal-Marts in the way! So if they have to shift 600 miles north, our forests are dead, our hops are dead, all these eco-systems are destroyed. No more beer."

Save the Ales is one of several campaigns touted on the website of Power Shift, Radford's half-year-old nonprofit, nestled alongside more serious endeavors like the solar community campaign and another targeting Citigroup. But rescuing endangered micro-brews isn't Radford's primary focus. It's just one of many creative strategies he's developed to capture reluctant environmentalists' hearts and minds.

With Power Shift, he's using the same strategies to wade into communities and convince them of the value of

solar power as an alternative to fossil fuels. "The polls are showing right now that the bulk of the population agrees that global warming is a big problem," he says. "The question is not whether they care or agree with you or believe you, it's how deeply they feel about it."

The answer to the myriad ills of global warming is obvious to Radford, as it has long been to many a green: Switch over to renewable energy. Power Shift, based in Washington and comprised of Radford, five college-aged "fellows" and a board of advisers—including his former boss, Greenpeace Executive Director John Passacantando—is working with various state Ralph Nader-backed Public Interest Research Groups to draft reports about the logistics, both legislative and technical, of switching to solar.

Power Shift has had one palpable success in its solar community campaign, which last year was involved in lobbying San Francisco to issue a bond to buy 80 megawatts of solar panels to stick on city buildings. In November, the city passed a pair of ballot initiatives to eventually buy 60 megawatts; short of the goal, but, at present, the entire country produces about 60 megawatts. The bond issue is enough, according to Power Shift, to make "San Francisco the solar capital of the United States."

This effort, Radford hopes, will be just the tip of the iceberg. "If the solar market continues to grow at 40 percent, which it did last year, and if 10 cities do what San Francisco is doing, then solar could be competitive [with fossil fuels] in the United States by 2005," he says. "That's our primary campaign right now."



To that end, he explains, Power Shift is working with the International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives,

which works with 100 communities "on reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, everywhere from Chicago to small towns in Massachusetts." Radford's group hopes to further ICLEI's goals by doing public education work while the ICLEI is in consultation with local governments.

Like many a modern eco-warrior, Radford is a suburban kid who got turned on to green issues in high school (he grew up in Oak Park, Illinois) and never looked back. In college he spent summers as a campaigner with the PIRG; after graduating, it was a stint in the Green Corps program, which led him right into Ozone Action, where he spent two years as a field director. Ozone Action merged into Greenpeace, and Radford ended up a climate campaigner there. In forming Power Shift, he picked a specific agenda and corralled all the high-power contacts he could find in the green community. But he plans to keep the organization small and to aim his message not at those in power, but at regular people.

A focus on the grassroots informs everything Radford wants to accomplish with Power Shift—he would much rather be out talking to actual community members, forcing change from below, than waiting for action from legislators. There's nothing wrong with lobbying at the national level to stop global warming, he says, but "there aren't any national groups right now that are working specifically on pushing clean energy in communities."

Now is the perfect time. "From the bottom up," he says. "That's where we can win right now." ■

Days of Infamy and Memory

By Matthew Jardine

Like December 7, September 11 is now undoubtedly "a day that will live in infamy" in the collective memory of the United States. What we recall about these dates, however, is perhaps not as important as what we do not remember about them. As Adam Hochschild has observed, "The world we live in ... is shaped far less by what we celebrate and mythologize than by the painful events we try to forget." And what Americans tend to forget—or not even know—is that December 7 and September 11 also mark, respectively, the beginning and the end of U.S. complicity in one of the worst atrocities in the post-World War II era, that of East Timor.

On December 7, 1975, Indonesia launched its bloody invasion of East Timor. The day prior, President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had met in Jakarta with Indonesia's dictator, Suharto. The recent release of formerly classified documents by the Washington-based National Security Archive now irrefutably confirms what many have long suspected: Ford and Kissinger gave Suharto the green light for the invasion. (Among major U.S. news outlets, only the *Washington Post* reported this revelation.)

According to the meeting transcript, Ford assured Suharto at the meeting that with regard to East Timor: "[We] will not press you on the issue. We understand ... the intentions you have." Kissinger then assuaged his host's fears that Washington would protest the use of American weaponry during the invasion. (The United States was supplying Indonesia's military with 90 percent of its arms at the time.) "It depends on how we construe it, whether it is in self-defense or is a foreign operation," explained Kissinger, suggesting they should spin the pending invasion of tiny East Timor as something other than aggression. He then opined "that it would be better if it were done after" they returned home. About 14 hours after Ford and Kissinger's departure, Indonesia launched its invasion.

An unnamed State Department official explained to an Australian newspaper a few months later why Washington had

condoned Jakarta's actions: "We regard Indonesia as a friendly, non-aligned nation—a nation we do a lot of business with." Washington thus provided billions of dollars in weaponry, military training, and economic assistance—as well as diplomatic cover—to Jakarta during its more than two decades of occupation.



The result was the deaths of well over 200,000 East Timorese—about one-third of the pre-invasion population.

Despite the efforts of the Indonesian military, however, the East Timorese resistance endured and ultimately prevailed in a U.N.-run referendum on the territory's political status in 1999. The result revealed overwhelming support for independence. But immediately thereafter, the military and its "militia" proxies launched a systematic campaign of revenge, destroying 70 percent of the territory's buildings and infrastructure, forcibly deporting about 250,000 people to Indonesian West Timor (where tens of thousands remain), and raping untold numbers of women—in addition to massacring at least 2,000. They created what many came to call, ironically enough, "Ground Zero."

It was not until September 11, 1999—one week into the rampage—that President Clinton finally ended all U.S. support for the Indonesian military. Washington's ambassador to Jakarta at the time, Stapleton Roy, explained why it took a president who had once called U.S. policy toward East Timor "unconscionable" so long to end Washington's partnership in crime with resource-rich Indonesia. "The dilemma is that Indonesia matters and East

Timor doesn't," he said. (Roy now heads Kissinger Associates, the former secretary of state's consulting firm.)

While Indonesia's brutal occupation is now over, Jakarta and its allies are trying to bury their ugly collective past. Although a U.N. commission recommended the establishment of an international tribunal for East Timor in January 2000, the United States and other members of the Security Council instead deferred to Jakarta's demand to prosecute its own. Almost two years later, Indonesia has not indicted anyone. But even if Indonesia were to do so, its planned tribunal would cover just a handful of the atrocities committed in 1999 and completely overlook crimes perpetrated from 1975 to 1998.

Meanwhile, although a few voices in the House and Senate continue to raise the issue of an international tribunal, the White House and most in Congress remain silent on the matter, as they do on the question of Washington's complicity in the crimes.

If forgetting is a perpetuation of the crime, remembering can be a form of redemption. But the redemption must be one of action, not just words. Human

Indonesia and its allies in Washington are trying to bury their ugly collective past.

rights advocates must pressure Washington to actively support the establishment of an international criminal tribunal for East Timor for all the years of the Indonesian occupation. The United States should also allow full disclosure of and atone for its own roles in East Timor's suffering. Only in this manner can the United States demonstrate that it is truly committed to what now seems forgotten: that justice requires accountability from all purveyors of terror and their backers—no matter who they are. ■

Matthew Jardine is the author of East Timor: Genocide in Paradise and the co-author of East Timor's Unfinished Struggle: Inside the Timorese Resistance. He is writing a book on East Timor's "Ground Zero."

The Liberal Media Strike Again

By Susan J. Douglas

As the "hunt for Bin Laden" dominates the network news, the heated pursuit is providing the Bush administration with excellent cover against news of more pesky issues. While reporters, talking heads and the president himself speculate over whether Bin Laden is in Tora Bora, Pakistan or St. Moritz, serious problems, like the significant rise in homelessness, the consequences of "welfare reform" (now coming home to roost), the increase in hunger (especially among children), and the dire consequences of September 11 on low-wage workers (unionized or not) remain virtually ignored.

Yet Bernard Goldberg, a former CBS reporter who says he used to be a liberal but left the fold because the media too often slant the news deliberately to "the left," suggests we shouldn't wear out our heartstrings for the homeless. Now out on the cable and talk radio hustings promoting his new book, *Bias*, Goldberg told Paula Zahn on CNN that most of the homeless are drunks, drug addicts or deinstitutionalized mental patients who have been portrayed more sympathetically on the news because of the lobbying efforts of their advocates.

The mayors of 27 cities seem to see things a bit differently. A report by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, released on December 11, showed the largest increase in demand for emergency food and shelter in 10 years. In New York, the number of homeless people is the highest since the city started keeping records. And 40 percent of the homeless are families with children, debunking Goldberg's stereotype of the bum drinking serial bottles of Night Train Express.

Despite Goldberg's claims about the clout of homeless advocates, we sure haven't seen many stories on TV—and certainly not on the "smoke 'em out of their holes" cable channels—about the staggering rise in homelessness for mothers and their kids. You know, been there, done that.

Jay Levin, writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, notes that even before 9/11 the

leaders of five major hunger relief organizations "declared a countrywide food emergency." Los Angeles County leads the country in hunger and poverty: More than 3 million people are poor, and 600,000 went hungry in 2000. Forty-five percent of those classified as "food insecure" were children.



In July, the Economic Policy Institute released a study documenting that 29 percent of working families in the United States with one to three kids under 12 don't earn enough to afford basic necessities like food, housing or health care. But because the media are so damn liberal, we haven't seen these kids on TV either.

Remember all those profiles of promiscuous, neglectful, parasitic, unwed welfare mothers the news media trafficked in when Clinton and his allies on the right campaigned to "end welfare as we know it"? Where are those welfare mothers today? In Los Angeles, 200,000 single mothers will be dropped from the roles—as per the rules—in 2003. In rural areas like West Virginia, women make up between 70 and 80 percent of welfare recipients. The average recipient is a white mother in her early thirties with two kids.

West Virginia is one of those states that has a five-year lifetime limit on welfare. What will happen to those women and their kids who live where there are no jobs, non-existent transportation systems and no day care? Will the news media cover these women then, especially if they don't fit into the dominant (and infantile) frame-

work of Bush's conquest over "the evil-doers" or jaunty images of him on the ranch entertaining foreign leaders?

It's not that the media should focus inward once again. What's really amazing about 9/11 is that after all the passionate rhetoric about multiple "wake-up calls," the nightly news on TV remains a half-hour long. Back in the early '60s, TV news was 15 minutes long, usually consisting of rip-and-read stories delivered by stone-pillar anchors. The wrenching images of the civil rights movement and the Kennedy assassination changed that.

Now, more than ever, even given the limitations of most TV news as we know it, Americans need much more in-depth reporting about about our own country and the rest of the world. Instead, we're right back to where we were on September 10, with overly simplified, superficial news, most of it determined by government sources and handouts, all of which lets Bush and his plutocrats off the hook.

The networks give us cops-and-robbers stories about "the hunt" in the mountains, which we are meant to

Now, more than ever, Americans need in-depth reporting about our own country and the rest of the world.

watch voyeuristically before going back into the somnambulant state the Bush administration most desires of us all. Such coverage emphasizes that we are technologically advanced and they are "backward" cave dwellers, rats on the run. Flattering, really, if you keep evidence of the barbarity of our own public policies off the screen. ■

Susan J. Douglas, a professor of communication studies at the University of Michigan, is the author of Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media and, most recently, Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination. She is currently working on an examination of how motherhood has been portrayed in the mass media.

Liberty on the Defensive

By Doug Ireland

The political mood in this country is getting uglier as the open-ended long war drags on. Frustrated at not seeing Osama bin Laden's head "brought home on a stick," as one CNN commentator growled, Americans are turning on their fellow citizens and the Constitution.

In Florida, West Virginia, Indiana and elsewhere, students have been expelled from high schools for expressing anti-war views. The arrests of Jewish Defense League members in Los Angeles on charges of plotting to blow up a mosque—and the offices of a Republican congressman of Lebanese descent—remind us that terrorism is not the exclusive province of "rag-heads" (the newly popular schoolyard epithet of choice). Those of us who have written critically of the war have become accustomed to receiving death threats of unimaginative obscenity.

The most reliable national poll—conducted for the *Wall Street Journal* by Democrat Peter Hart and Republican Bob Teeter—shows big majorities support military tribunals for terrorist suspects, blanket roundups of legal residents of Arab descent for questioning, government monitoring of e-mails, detention of some 600 suspects without charging or naming them, and wiretapping of detainees' conversations with their lawyers. Even that odious religious primitive John Ashcroft is popular, with a 57 percent approval rating (and only 13 percent critical). That's not surprising when one considers the failure of the Senate Democrats to lay a glove on Ashcroft when he appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee; their spineless, powderpuff questioning was so ineffectual the *Wall Street Journal* chortled that it was a "rout" for the Holy Roller.

Poll-driven congressional Democrats have taken to heart the strategy memo written by former Clinton strategists Stan Greenberg, the pollster, and James Carville, the pit bull, which instructed them to breathe no word of criticism on the conduct of the war, either at home or abroad, and instead to concentrate their fire on the economy. But even in that they have failed to make a coherent case with populist appeal. As Russ Hemenway, veteran director of the National Committee for an Effective Congress, puts it, "Ordinary people can't understand what they're talking about. They have no theme. They should be hammering on trickle-down economics and corporate welfare."

But with the party's vice presidential candidate last year, Sen. Joe Lieberman, having endorsed the Bush approach to the economy—tax cuts for business over help for the unemployed—and the chairwoman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, Sen. Patty Murray, and many other Democrats supporting the \$30 billion Boeing-



ISAAC MENASHEZ/JUMA

ABOVE: Demonstrators heckle anti-war marchers in Washington in late September.

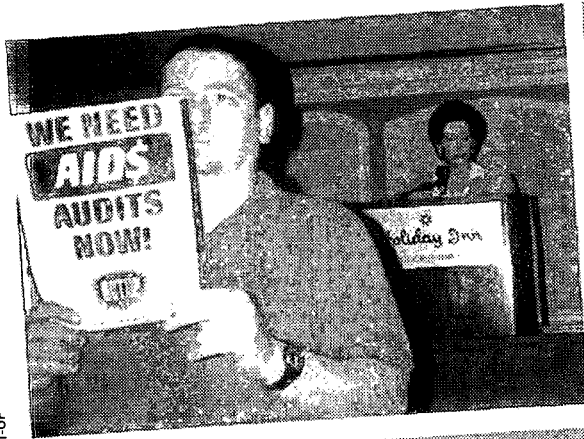
OPPOSITE: Dissident AIDS activists Michael Petrelis (left) and David Pasquarelli (right, holding sign) have been jailed on trumped-up charges of "terrorism."

boondoggle bailout, why be surprised that the Democratic leadership's attempts at compromise have fallen flat?

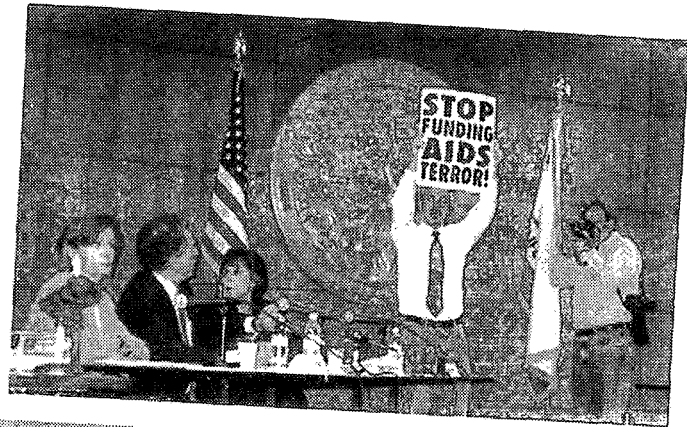
The CNN/Gallup poll confirms the Democrats' failure to effectively develop a truly alternative anti-recession program: It now shows 44 percent favor the GOP's approach to only 35 percent for the Democrats' (a Republican gain from November, when the numbers were even). Indeed, a plurality now believes that the recession is just a normal part of the business cycle: 49 percent oppose any direct government action on the economy, as opposed to 47 percent in favor. In other words, half the country thinks the "economic stimulus" package is irrelevant.

That, Hemenway says, is helping to make Democratic prospects for next year's congressional elections "simply dreadful." And if, as he forecasts, the Democrats lose the Senate next year and fail to gain in the House, the Republican rollback of civil liberties will continue unchecked.

But not all the predations on our civil liberties are coming from Washington. One of the most unsettling reflections of the malignant national mood can be found in the supposedly liberal city of San Francisco, where two dissident AIDS activists have been arrested as "terrorists." Michael Petrelis and David Pasquarelli are hardly figures who inspire universal affection in the gay and AIDS communities. Petrelis is a sometimes-useful gadfly whose guerrilla-theater tactics, often targeting what he considers the AIDS and gay establishments, can range from silly to offensive to downright counterproductive. Pasquarelli is an HIV denier (meaning



ACT-UP



MAGNUS NEWS

that he believes HIV is not the cause of AIDS) against whom restraining orders have been issued to prohibit him from harassing individuals at the San Francisco AIDS Foundation, Project Inform and the city health department.

The duo are currently in jail, charged with making harassing phone calls to editors and reporters at the *San Francisco Chronicle* demanding, among other things, more attention to the threat to the AIDS community contained in the model quarantine law Bush is pushing for states in the wake of the bioterrorism scare. (The proposed law, a version of which is now working its way through the California legislature, authorizes a quarantine for "any infectious disease that can be transmitted from person to person," a definition so broad that it includes HIV. The city's AIDS czar has already suggested quarantine for "promiscuous" HIV-infected men).

The indictment of Petrelis and Pasquarelli accuses them of stalking, terrorist threats and conspiracy on 27 counts—half of which are felonies—carrying a potential total penalty of 78 years in prison. A probable cause hearing on the indictments is not scheduled until January 23—and meanwhile, the two ailing men are languishing behind bars, where they are being held on bail of \$500,000 each. Both men have AIDS, are in fragile health and have complained of the inadequacy of medical attention in jail. Petrelis has esophageal candidiasis ("thrush"), a particularly painful affliction, and on December 8 a judge ordered him to be rushed to the prison medical unit for treatment (a serious skin condition now covers 60 percent of his body).

One can object to both Petrelis' and Pasquarelli's politics and actions, but what is being done to them is deeply disturbing. The prohibitively high bail for these activist marginals amounts to preventive detention. While admitting to making obscene late-night phone calls, both men vehemently deny having made a bomb threat, as the indictments charge. Those who have no sympathy for the pair should recall the case of ACT UP's Kate Sorenson, who was arrested in protests at the 2000 Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, then

held on \$1 million bail on felony charges, but eventually acquitted. Or the takeover of GlaxoSmithKline's New York offices last February by ACT UP activists protesting inflated drug prices, against whom felony charges are still pending.

The punishing of nonviolent civil—or even uncivil—disobedience with felony charges, instead of the usual misdemeanors, constitutes an attempt to repress political dissent. And while late-night obscene phone calls are a repugnant and juvenile form of political protest, the accusations of "terrorism" against Petrelis and Pasquarelli by San Francisco's putatively progressive District Attorney Terance Hallinan—who, with his radical past, should know better—can only be viewed as blatant political pandering to his hometown newspaper. And it makes it difficult for the duo to get a fair trial. (As the magazine went to press, *In These Times* learned that Rep. Nancy Pelosi of San Francisco, the House Democratic Whip, had written to the Justice Department requesting that Petrelis and Pasquarelli be investigated under the USA PATRIOT Act for "terrorism." New felony charges also have been added to Pasquarelli's indictment by Hallinan, who had had his bail increased by another \$100,000.)

An open letter initiated by Queer Watch's William K. Dobbs, a New York-based gay civil liberties lawyer, demanding bail reduction for Petrelis and Pasquarelli has already been signed by 125 prominent AIDS and gay activists, writers, lawyers and academics—few of whom agree with the imprisoned pair's views. Judy Greenspan, an HIV advocate for California Prison Focus, has been on the receiving end of some of their phone calls, but says, "I don't believe in prosecuting them on felony charges, and I certainly don't support the use of the word terrorist."

Scott Tucker, a well-known progressive gay activist and writer who co-founded ACT UP/Philadelphia, says that "Petrelis has a wide reputation for being erratic and abrasive, but he has also asked some of the rude questions which have crossed the minds of others who have kept quiet." But Tucker adds: "Many Americans are wondering what it means for the courts to do their thing under the shadow of Ashcroft and the USA PATRIOT Act; the implication of this case goes far beyond these two defendants. Since 9/11, the definition of terrorism has drifted far from ground zero. That should concern all activists and civil libertarians." ■

"Since 9/11, the definition of terrorism has drifted far from ground zero."

OPERATION INFINITE JEST

THE RETURN OF THE CULTURE WARS

By Chris Lehmann

One hundred and fifteen people have vanished, and I'm trying to figure out why. The bodies in question had appeared by name in a report bearing the near-operatic title "Defending Our Civilization: How Our Universities Are Failing America And What Can Be Done About It." The report is the handiwork of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), a group co-founded in 1995 by Lynne Cheney and Sen. Joseph Lieberman to raise periodic alarms over the state of higher learning in America. Previously the ACTA had issued reports that denounced the atrophy of history requirements on American campuses and the PC excesses of today's scholarship in Shakespeare studies.

This time, however, the group was seeking to document a more pressing threat: that America's "college and university faculty have been the weak link" in the country's mobilization against terrorism. As the authors of the report, Anne Neal and Jerry Martin, put it in a much quoted passage from the introduction: "The message of much of academe was clear: **BLAME AMERICA FIRST.**"

The report puts this dismaying reflex down largely to a pedagogical failure: "Expressions of pervasive moral relativism are a staple of academic life in this country and an apparent symptom of an educational system that has increasingly suggested that Western civilization is the primary source of the world's ills—even though it gave us the ideals of democracy, human rights, individual liberty, and mutual tolerance." To drive this impression home in a dramatic fashion, the bulk of "Defending Civilization" is devoted to an exhaustive-looking appendix, much longer than the main text, in which 115 utterances of various alleged "Blame America First" sentiments were presented to elicit shock and outrage.

By early December, however, the names attached to these statements had disappeared—yanked off the ACTA Web site and excised from the final versions that would be sent out to the group's members. Rumors began to circulate among professors and campus activists that the names had been pulled out because far-right thugs were

already seizing upon the report as a hit list, in much the same fashion that anti-choice zealots used Internet directories listing the names and addresses of abortion providers as assassination manuals.

When I put this question to Anne Neal, she grows indignant. "I'm amazed at the hyperbolic, imaginary claims being made by professors. Are they saying they can't be criticized?" Yet Neal supplies only the most elliptical explanation of this odd vanishing act: "We are interested in what's being said, and the fact that it's being said by faculty and not students. Who the particular speakers are is not important."

I go through a litany of obvious objections: The group's report claims that the whole campus debate over the war is one-sided, yet the ACTA won't even permit those whom they've accused—not always accurately—to answer. And excising the identities of the speakers and writers seems downright perverse for a group championing higher academic standards. Would the ACTA accept anonymous quotes in academic papers—or, for that matter, in this article?

"The names can be traced through the citations," Neal says, referring to the footnotes at the end of the report. "The focus of the report for the trustees and alumni who will get the report eventually is this striking cleavage between the intellectual elite and the rest of the country."

But doesn't a single block of unsourced type amount to a willful distortion of what actual people said in specific situations? Isn't the ACTA concerned about its credibility? "I'm saying the sources are identifiable to the audience," Neal replies. "We're talking about the atmosphere. The atmosphere is what's important."

The atmosphere on my end of the conversation is starting to billow with fog. I ring off with Neal—who in spite of her unyielding determination to remain on message (and contrary to the standard Punch-and-Judy scripting of American culture warfare) is neither unreasonable nor noticeably Manichean in temperament. I feel, nevertheless, like I've clambered out of a rabbit hole.

Maybe some math will help. I return to the appendix of "Defending Our Civilization," which I had printed out before the disappearance. As I pore over the appen-



dix, it gradually dawns on me that there weren't really 115 speakers in the first place: Several of the quotes are multiple entries attributed to the same person. William Blum, identified only as a "journalist at a University of North Carolina teach-in" rates three entries, with walk-on lines such as "there are few if any nations in the world that have harbored more terrorists than the United States."

Stan Goff, a "panelist" at the same UNC event, appears twice, with gnomic prophecies like: "We will tumble from chauvinism into the abyss of recession and tribalism." And slogans from demonstration placards are quoted repeatedly (mainly old standbys like "an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind")—even though we have no way of knowing whether the placard-brandishers in question are even members of a university community. Still other entries describe genuinely bone-headed bids by one or another university administration to tamp down expression—reprimanding student editorial cartoonists and blocking faculty Web sites that support the U.S. war effort—on grounds that they would somehow injure the sensibilities of minority and foreign students. (Each of these oafish actions, in addition, appears to have been reversed after formal protests were lodged.)

I decide to tally up the list again, taking care to set aside the utterances by students, journalists and panelists, the unsourced protest slogans and the actions by administrators. The report, after all, has stipulated faculty to be "the weak link" here—and it is, by the lights of the ACTA, professors who are charged with transmitting the ideals of our civilization on to the next generation. My count yields 63 utterances

nonce, at least, our civilization seems to be spared organized betrayal at the hands of inside agitators.

The point of all this is not, per the usual strictures of our culture wars, to demonize the ACTA as the real threat to our civilization, to dismiss them as overheated propagandists or lackeys of right-wing foundations. It is, rather, to begin to circle around a bigger question: Where has such rhetoric come from? Why do so many of the most dubious assumptions of culture warfare—that culture is principally an instrument of social control; that the tics of cultural selection are proper materials for bitter, protracted public argument—receive such ready assent on either side of the battle? And why, especially at the height of a clear and pressing threat to America's global interests and domestic security, do the partisans insist that such questions matter now more than ever? Why is a war against terrorism, of all things, so often portrayed as culture war by other means?

Lest you think I exaggerate, or lay the brunt of the indictment too squarely on the culture warriors of the right, consider what is emerging as a common theme of left-liberal commentary on the war against the Taliban: Having routed a deranged, fundamentalist foreign government on the field of battle, we should now dial the Kulturkampf up another notch at home. "The struggle of democratic secularism, religious tolerance, individual freedom and feminism against authoritarian patriarchal religion, culture and morality is going on all over the world," Ellen Willis announced in a recent *Nation* article, echoing sentiments already aired by Christopher Hitchens and Michael Lind. "The culture war has been a centerpiece of American politics for 30 years or more, shaping our debates and our policies on everything from abortion, censorship and crime to race, education and social welfare. ... Yet we shrink from seeing the relation between our own cultural conflicts and the logic of *jihad* ."

This tight identification of religious crusades, East and West, flows, naturally enough, from a single, pleasure-hating psychic structure. "If exposure to forbidden freedoms aroused in Osama bin Laden and his confrères unconscious rage at their own repression," Willis writes, "what better way to ward off the devil than to redirect that rage against it? And if the World Trade Center represented global

capitalism ... wasn't there yet another, more primal brand of symbolism embodied in those twin phalluses?"

Going the epic civilizational theses of Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama one better, Willis pleads that culture conflict should form a central plank in U.S. foreign policy from now on. "There are many things to be learned from the shock of September 11," she writes. "Surely one of the most important is that culture is not only a political matter, but a matter of life and death. ... To recognize that the enemy is fundamentalism itself—not the 'evil' anti-American fundamentalists, as opposed to the allegedly friendly kind—is also to make a statement about American cultural politics." And taking a final swipe at center and left efforts to downplay cultural struggles in deference to more conventional economic and political ones, Willis delivers a solemn envoi: "It remains to be seen whether fear of terrorism trumps fear of facing our own cultural contradictions."

Why is a war against terrorism, of all things, so often portrayed as culture war by other means?

by non-professors (or by sources too vaguely characterized to be presumed to be anything)—leaving 54 faculty members on the list. (At least four of these remarks, in addition, came from faculty who are on record supporting the war—Todd Gitlin, Richard Falk, Strobe Talbott and Paul Kennedy. The first three of these, moreover, were prominent figures in the '60s anti-war moment, so their endorsement of a U.S. military action seems far more noteworthy than any qualifications they may have attached to it.)

Still, hewing to the most generous interpretation of things, the ACTA turned up 54 faculty members who said something in public that could be construed as critical of American foreign policy. There are probably more university faculty who are practicing Wiccans or Freemasons—and certainly more who are creationists. In other words, one might safely conclude that the fifth column of the ACTA's feverish imaginings resembles something more like a toothpick; for the

There are many immediate objections to raise to such rhetoric. First, there's the tacit moral equation of al-Qaeda, which targets thousands of innocent civilians for death, with American Protestants who overwhelmingly practice peaceful (if lavishly funded) political persuasion. As appealing as such analogies may sound to the arch-secularist ear, there remains a great difference between church-pamphleteering or campaigning for school board slates and blowing up embassies and skyscrapers.

Or consider that Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell have been in the worst possible political odor ever since their joint announcement on the September 13 broadcast of the *700 Club* that the World Trade Center attacks bespoke the judgment of an angry god on a decadent, fetus-aborting, gay-tolerant nation. To the extent there has been an explicit linkage of domestic fundamentalism with the al-Qaeda brand, in other words, it has been vigorously and all but universally repudiated. Finally, a less tendentious acquaintance with Freud might have led Willis to conclude that the very function of culture is largely to sustain and express "cultural contradictions"—the clash of instinct and civilization, reason and desire, the universal and the particular—not to deliver them before warring camps for resolution, on the world-historical stage of foreign policy, no less.

Willis' eager demonization of the fundamentalists poses a more central problem, which oddly enough brings to mind the ACTA's own lamentations on the abysmal state of historical knowledge in the United States. Hard as it may be to imagine today, American fundamentalists were a political nullity through much of their early career. Early fundies read with exceptionally literal rigor the Bible's various admonitions to leave the arrangements of worldly power and property to those on their own likely course to perdition; such matters were no concern of the solemn believer.

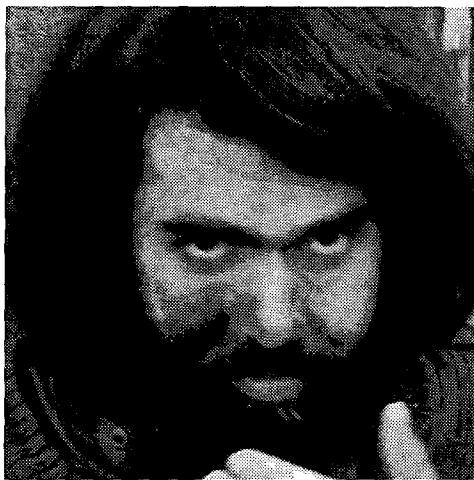
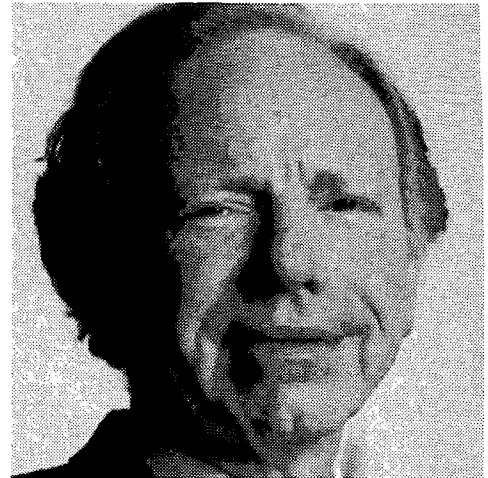
What changed all this was an exceptionally bitter culture war. As America prepared to enter World War I, American fundamentalists were targeted in various propaganda outlets for their official stance of otherworldly neutrality. Ardent academic propagandists whipped up the perception that fundamentalists were in the thrall of German biblical scholarship and hence covert sympathizers with the enemy Huns (a particularly bizarre claim, since Germany was also home to the new modernist brand of historical biblical scholarship that fundamentalism initially arose to demolish).

After enduring such slanders, American fundamentalists resolved that they could no longer afford to remain aloof from

political affairs. Resolutions were passed at regional conferences, candidates endorsed, and a doctrinal hue and cry went forth to demonstrate once and for all the rock-solid Americanism of the fundamentalist faith. And so the path was cleared for full fundamentalist participation in the great *Kulturkamps* of the 1920s, such as the crusades for Prohibition and the "Americanization" of immigrants, and the battle over teaching evolution in the schools.

Much the same dynamic holds for the political prominence of fundamentalism in today's politics. Paul Weyrich, the mailing-list baron of the religious right, reports that it was neither the *Roe v. Wade* decision nor the vast godless agora of mass entertainment that produced the great upsurge in conservative Protestant political activism in the '80s. Rather, the religious right's great organizing putsch was sparked by a fairly obscure 1978 directive from the Internal Revenue Service that religious private schools were to be denied tax-exempt status if they did not meet racial quotas.

In other words, American fundamentalists felt (with some justification) that their religious schools—themselves a hallmark of believers' will to separate from mainstream civic life—were being singled out for discriminatory treatment from a hostile state. And so commenced the successive fundraising, voter-registration and school-board election drives that turned the Christian right into one of the bedrocks of modern Amer-



All the rage (clockwise from top left): the Rev. Jerry Falwell, Connecticut Sen. Joseph Lieberman, Taliban fighter John Walker Sidh and journalist Christopher Hitchens.

ican conservatism. (The order itself generated 100,000 letters of protest and was reversed by Congress the following year.) It is up to future historians of liberal decline to decide whether the zealous pursuit of racial quotas in already conservative religious educational institutions was really worth the enormous, rightward transformation of American politics that ensued. But such historical set pieces do suggest, at the very least, that we think twice before we open up a new rolling domestic front of our war against terrorism that targets biblical literalists for vague and unappeasable cultural retribution.

Nevertheless, the current, reigning vision of America's war on terror as a pitched battle of towering, intractable civilizational premises seems certain to guarantee that the culture warriors on the left and right alike will continue exploiting the conflict for their pet domestic agendas. It seems all the more likely to proceed further down this course, indeed, now that the military phase of the Afghan war has yielded such unexpected, immediate results. In this setting, the egghead-baiting of the right and the fundie-baiting of the left are two sides of the same well-worn coin: The selective vetting of an extreme minority body of opinion is made, via the curious alchemy of culture determinism, to stand in for an entire sensibility imagined to be gaining covert command of the culture at large.

On the right, a think tank produces a harum-scarum collection of decontextualized—and, finally, unattributed—utterances and anecdotes, seeking to conjure up a monolithic, America-hating professoriat out of thin air (or, more precisely, out of a misleading assemblage of administrative actions, recycled news items, teach-in sloganeers and demonstration placards). On the left, never-specified Christian authoritarians, wracked by weird patriarchal libidinal demons, morph blurrily into stealth global terrorists for whom no sacrifice of civilians is too great and no military engagement is too bloody.

And on it goes. No sooner had John Walker Sidh, the 20-year-old Taliban warrior from Marin County, California, stumbled out of a Mazzar-e-Sharif prison compound than a fresh round of pundit-flak from culture alarmists commenced. It turns out that, as a troubled teen, Walker had posed on Internet listserv as a street-tough rap music connoisseur. He'd converted to Islam after reading *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, was named for John Lennon and enjoyed the full doting attentions of divorced parents who encouraged their son to sample the teachings of other religious traditions. Presto, English professor Shelby Steele announced on the *Wall Street Journal's* op-ed page: "A certain cultural liberalism cleared the way for [Walker's] strange odyssey of belief."

Walker was prepared for his seduction by Islam, Steele opines, by a "post-'60s cultural liberalism (more than political liberalism) that gave every step toward treason a feel of authenticity and authority." And sure enough, Steele summons up, in the next breath, the same wayward vectors of lapsed American cultural authority so prominently demonized by the ACTA: "This liberalism thrives as a subversive, winking, countercultural hipness. We saw it in the stream of 'hip' academics and intellectuals who—no sooner than the planes had struck—began to slash at their own country as if to keep it from gaining any victim's authority of its own."

Steele appears to have given the right's culture front an ugly new methodological twist: Where the ACTA was content to eradicate named human subjects in its quest after a convenient monolith of opinion, Steele opportunistically overstuffs an already prominent adolescent psyche with his own didactic script of culture warfare. It seems quite plain, however, that if John Walker had not existed, conservative culture warriors would have had to invent him—as indeed they have, in spite of knowing next to nothing about his actual existence. One awaits with a weary heart the arrival of the first leftish op-ed depicting Walker as the wholesale product of a divorced couple wrestling with the intolerable contradictions of a Catholic morality.

**If John Walker had not existed,
conservative culture warriors
would have had to invent him.**

There should be some exit point from such giddy invocations of the iron determinism of culture, especially since they spring from a little-noted paradox: Our generation of high-culture warfare invests the products of American culture with this sort of world-historical import at the very time when its chosen content is so resolutely trivial. One of the early bits of popular soothsaying in the immediate aftermath of September 11 was that we would soon find ourselves awash in a New Seriousness—that the childish things of '90s boom culture and Bill Clinton's America would wither away, and America would be briskly reprogrammed to adhere to the reveries of our sober anchorman-propagandists for the Greatest Generation. Moreover, the argument went, the very virtues that had made the United States target of first resort for the medieval reprisals of al-Qaeda—ethnic pluralism, gender equality, religious tolerance—should bring a long-overdue renaissance of American civic culture.

Oddly, however, we are using the materials of our culture to jury-rig a domestic politics that consistently denies the free play of these virtues. Tolerance, for Shelby Steele, segues briskly into moral relativism and treason; for Ellen Willis, it cannot be imagined to extend to the warped phalocrats of American fundamentalism. The ACTA defends free speech on campus, but reserves its own right to conceal the identities of speakers. And all of these partisans militate on behalf of the broad mandate to continue waging the culture wars with redoubled force here at home. If we really want our culture to bear the sort of meaning we imagine it has, we should try approaching it as the outcome of something like reasoned debate rather than as a spoil of war. ■

Chris Lehmann, former culture and managing editor of *In These Times*, is a senior editor for the *Washington Post Book World*.

The Arms Dealer Next Door

International billionaire, French prisoner, Angolan weapons broker, Arizona Republican. Who is Pierre Falcone?

By Ken Silverstein

On December 1, billionaire businessman Pierre Falcone walked out of the Fleury-Merogis prison near Paris after a judge opted not to prolong his provisional detention. Despite having spent a full year behind bars, it's doubtful that Falcone felt a great sense of relief that day.

The key player in a huge scandal that has tarnished some of France's best-known politicians, Falcone is still expected to stand trial later this year for his role in the sale of half a billion dollars worth of Eastern European weapons to Angola. He obtained his release only after paying a \$15 million bail, turning over his passport to the court, and accepting severe restrictions on his movements and activities.

Falcone was initially charged with illegal arms dealing because he allegedly brokered the Angola sales without authorization from the French government agency that reviews weapons exports, but prosecutors later dropped that count due to a legal technicality. He remains accused of bribing numerous prominent parties to further his arms business—most notably Jean-Christophe Mitterand, son of ex-President Francois Mitterand—and of failing to pay tens of millions of dollars in taxes on profits from the Angola deals, legal or not.

Though largely unreported, the man at the center of "Angolagate," as the French press has dubbed the scandal, has extensive American ties. Falcone's primary residence is a mammoth estate in Paradise Valley, Arizona, where he and his wife, Sonia, a former Miss Bolivia International, are active in political and community affairs. Falcone's American activities range from advising a major U.S. oil company to teaming with a Virginia-based arms dealer who has worked for both the CIA and Saddam Hussein. What's more, a floundering health and beauty company run by Sonia Falcone made a controversial \$100,000 donation to the Republican Party during the 2000 presidential campaign.

Beyond Falcone's own stake in the legal outcome, Angolagate has significant geopolitical implications. Angola has emerged as one of the world's leading oil producers—it is now America's ninth-largest supplier, ahead of Kuwait and England and right behind Norway and Colombia—and is sitting on enormous untapped reserves. But civil war and rampant corruption in Angola, which serves as the backdrop to the Falcone affair, has kept the country isolated on the international stage and its economy in shambles. "Angola is going to remain a pariah as long as the government keeps cutting deals with people like Falcone," says a former State Department official who has closely followed Angolagate. "It sends a terrible message to the rest of Africa, because if Angola can't make it with all of its energy resources, there's not much hope for the rest of the continent."

When I first heard about Pierre Falcone—and his beautiful Bolivian wife, vast wealth and jet-setting lifestyle—I imagined a dapper, handsome man straight out of a John Le Carré novel. It came as something of a surprise when I first saw his picture, which revealed him to be a plump, balding man who looked more like an upscale insurance salesman than a covert operator.

Falcone was born in 1954 in Algeria, which was then under French rule. His father, Pierre Sr., was the mayor of a town called Bou-Haroun-Alger, ran a fishing fleet and, according to *Le Monde*, was involved in the arms trade. After the Algerian Revolution of 1962, the family moved to France, where Falcone lived until he was 22. Since then, he has traveled the world, building a business empire that runs from advertising in China to oil in Africa.



Pierre Falcone is out on \$15 million bail.

Falcone bought a home in Arizona in the '80s and met Sonia Montero at a 1990 Formula One auto race in Phoenix. They were married four years later at a church outside of Paris. Hundreds of guests attended the wedding and reception—the latter was held at the Chateau de Ferrieres, the 19th-century home of the Rothschilds—including the groom's good friend, Jean-Christophe Mitterand.

The arms trade comprises a small, if notable, part of Falcone's commercial activities. In France, he served as a consultant to a government agency known as SOFREMI, which exports military equipment under the auspices of the Interior Ministry. In that capacity, he reportedly arranged sales to Africa and Latin America. Through Arcadi Gaydamak—an

immensely wealthy Russian émigré businessman and his chief partner in Angola—Falcone also had good contacts in Eastern Europe, which in the post-Cold War period has become a global weapons bazaar.

The deals that sparked the Angolagate scandal took place in 1993, when the Angolan government of Eduardo dos Santos was under siege by the right-wing guerrilla group known as UNITA, headed by Jonas Savimbi. During the Cold War, Angola could count on the Soviet Union for weapons—UNITA had been backed by Presidents Reagan and Bush, but was dumped by the Clinton administration—but its former ally had disappeared from the map. Furthermore, arms purchases by the government and UNITA remained prohibited under the 1991 Bicesse Accords negotiated in Portugal. Desperate, dos Santos contacted Jean-Bernard Curial, a friend and member of the French Socialist Party, to see if Paris would arm his regime.

Curial was dubious about the prospects. France was then in a period of political “cohabitation” with Socialist Francois Mitterand (who died in 1996) holding the presidency, but day-to-day governing was carried out by conservative Prime Minister Eduardo Balladur. Several key members of Balladur’s government, including the minister of defense, traditionally had been close to UNITA. Curial turned for advice to Jean-Christophe Mitterand, who had built up a network of contacts in Africa while serving as his father’s chief adviser and, despite having resigned his post the previous year, remained well-connected at the presidential palace. He suggested to Curial that his friend Falcone might be able to offer assistance to dos Santos through less formal channels.

In November 1993, Falcone and Gaydamak helped arrange the sale to Angola of \$47 million in small arms. A second deal for \$563 million worth of weapons, including tanks and helicopters, got underway early the following year. The supplier in both cases was ZTS-OSOS, a Slovakian company that rounded up the weapons from Russia, Bulgaria and Ukraine. The Angolans paid for the weapons with oil, which Falcone and Gaydamak sold with the help of Glencore—a company owned by Marc Rich, the fugitive financier who would later receive a controversial pardon from Bill Clinton during his last days as president.

Thanks to their sensitive role in Angola, Falcone and Gaydamak became intimate cronies of dos Santos, whose systematic pilfering of the state treasury has made him by some accounts one of the world’s 50 richest men. (On December 12, Reuters reported that \$1.5 billion of the \$3.5 billion that Angola earned in 2000 from oil exports was unaccounted for.) The two men were given a stake in virtually every key sector of the Angolan economy, from food to diamonds to oil. In 1999, the government picked Falcon Oil Holdings, a Falcone-owned firm registered in Panama, as a minority partner to ExxonMobil on a huge offshore site.

Beyond these economic privileges, Falcone and Gaydamak gained a remarkable degree of political influence in Angola.

According to Gaydamak—a wanted man in France who now resides in Israel, where I reached him on his cell phone—both he and Falcone were granted Angolan citizenship and diplomatic passports, served as advisers to the government and were named employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Indeed, Falcone was so well-connected in Angola that before his arrest he had become a door-opener for companies hoping to do business there. In June 2000, top officials from Phillips Petroleum, which has been seeking to expand in Angola, made the pilgrimage from corporate headquarters in Bartlesville, Oklahoma to Arizona to seek Falcone’s counsel and assistance. (Phillips declined to discuss the meeting.)

The first vague details of Angolagate came to light five years ago when a highly regarded insider newsletter called *La Lettre du Continent* broke the story. French judicial officials later found that Breco International, a Falcone firm involved in the Angola arms transfers, subsequently made payments to a number of his associates. Jean-Christophe Mitterand, who has been out on bail since early last year but remains under investigation, acknowledges receiving \$1.8 million into his numbered Swiss bank account four years ago, but says that the money was for consulting work unrelated to Angolan arms sales.

There’s surely an element of hypocrisy in the French government’s prosecution of Falcone, for it’s clear that key officials viewed his arms transfers to Angola as serving French foreign policy objectives and approved of the deals. France depends on Africa for most of its petroleum needs, but traditional suppliers like Gabon and Cameroon have declining reserves. Angola—set to become one of the world’s major petroleum exporters in the next 20 years—has not traditionally had strong ties to France, but in recent years it has become an increasingly important source of its oil, and French energy companies have been awarded major contracts by the dos Santos regime. “There is a relationship between Falcone selling the weapons and the improved relationship between France and Angola,” says Sharon Coutoux of Survie, a Paris-based human rights group.

Falcone, too, has suggested that the French government endorsed his activities. In a 14-page letter to investigators, he denied paying off any government officials, saying his role in the Angolan arms sales was limited to selling the oil that paid for the weapons. The greatest indignity of all, he wrote, is that the French are the primary beneficiary of his activities. His work with SOFREMI enabled Paris to “penetrate delicate and complex markets” abroad, while his role in Angola helped France win favor with an energy-rich regime that “the entire world is interested in courting.” The accusations against him, Falcone said, are as “unjust as the charge of witchcraft [was] in the Middle Ages.”

In Washington, Falcone’s complex ties in Angola were well known among government Africa specialists. Four past and present officials told me they were acquainted with Falcone via diplomatic cables and intelligence reports. J. Stephen Morrison, who served on the secretary of state’s policy-

Falcone may have been lobbying for Angola’s interests when his wife sent \$100,000 to the Republican Party.

planning staff until last year, says Clinton administration officials were aware that Falcone was a key player in Angola and that "most of what he did was not very transparent. The scandal caught people by surprise, but it was not a big shock."

Falcone's name is also familiar within the narrow world of international arms dealers. Sarkis Soghanalian, whose 40-year career in the arms business began when he armed Christian militias in Lebanon at the request of the CIA, says he met Falcone several times in Paris, where both had offices off the Champs-Élysées. Through Mark Geragos, his American attorney (whose other clients include Rep. Gary Condit), Soghanalian said that he and Falcone shared a mutual client, Mobutu Sese Seko, the former dictator of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo). According to Soghanalian, Falcone brokered diamonds-for-weapons deals on behalf of Mobutu and was intimate with the dictator and his entourage.

Among Falcone's closest contacts in the arms business is Stephen "Satch" Baumgart, who operates out of Reston, Virginia. A former Naval officer, Baumgart has been involved in the murkier fringes of the weapons trade since the '70s, when he brokered sales to American allies such as Mobutu and Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines—all apparently with a wink and a nod from U.S. intelligence. "A CIA agent would drop by our office and Baumgart would brief him about his overseas travels, particularly about his contacts in the Arab world," recalls Gerhard Bauch, a one-time German intelligence officer who worked for Baumgart. "They knew about everything we did."

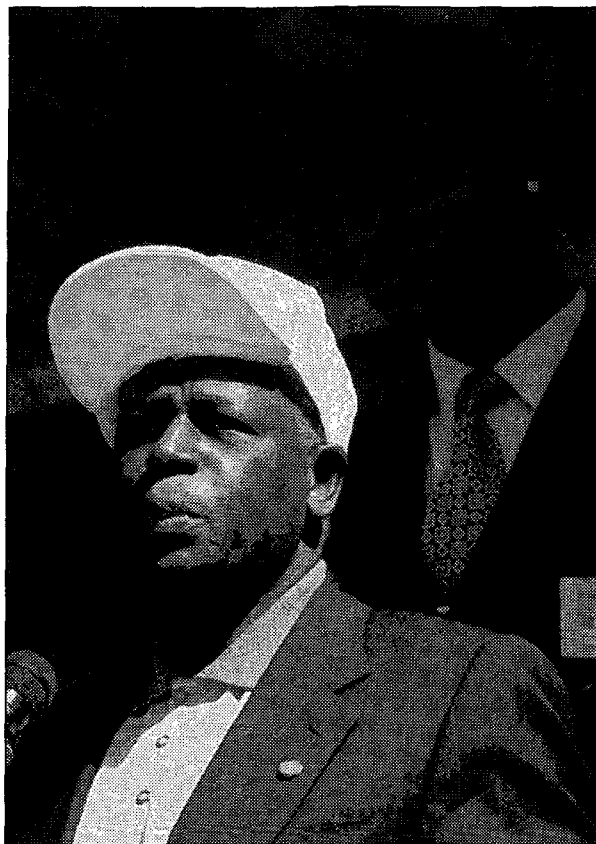
During the mid-'80s, Baumgart—who did not return phone calls seeking comment—helped supply Saddam Hussein, who was then seen by the Reagan administration as a bulwark against the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. A prominent European arms broker who knows both Falcone and Baumgart says the two men first teamed up in the '80s and worked together until at least a few years ago. This source says that Falcone and Baumgart had interests in Angola, among other places. (Gaydamak also confirms that Falcone and "Mr. Satch" worked together, though he denied knowing details of their business dealings.)

If it was an open secret in certain Washington circles, Falcone's involvement in the arms trade was entirely unknown in Paradise Valley, an elite enclave wedged between Phoenix and Scottsdale. Reginald Ballantyne III, president of PMH Health Resources Inc., says the Falcones are highly regarded local figures and that he and other residents were stunned when Angolagate hit the press. "It didn't make any

sense to me then, and it still doesn't make any sense to me," Ballantyne said. "I just couldn't connect the dots."

One of the nation's wealthiest communities, Paradise Valley is solidly conservative. The local government levies no property taxes, and services such as water and fire protection have been privatized. I received a tour of the town from Kathy Smith of Hague Partners, which sold \$103 million worth of property here last year. As we drove along Lincoln Road in Smith's cream-colored Cadillac, we passed one of the town's few commercial properties, the newly renovated Applewood pet resort, where residents board their pets when they're on vacation. A suite for a dog, which includes a bed and cable TV, goes for \$38 a night, but extras—a fitness walk, "pupsicles," a swim in the resort's bone-shaped pool, topped off with a blow dry—can raise that rate quite a bit higher.

Far atop Mummy Mountain, Smith pointed to the estate of Leona Helmsley, which has been on the market for several years without attracting a buyer, despite a price cut from \$24 million to \$14 million. Smith used a magnetic card to pass through the gates of the El Maro neighborhood, where Chicago Bulls owner Jerry Reinsdorf erected a private playground for his grandchildren on a two-acre lot adjacent



For brokering the arms deals, President Eduardo dos Santos gave Falcone a stake in everything from oil to diamonds.

to his summer home. Just before his arrest, Falcone bought a new \$10.6 million estate not far from the El Maro section—the most expensive home purchase in state history, according to the *Arizona Republic*. A post-sale real estate listing speaks in hushed tones of the property's paneled library, theater, swimming pool, tennis courts, seven bedrooms and 11 bathrooms, and reveals that the Falcones don't have a mortgage on the property. It was purchased outright by SPEP, a Turk and Caicos Island trust controlled by Pierre.

As members of the area's upper crust, the Falcones occasionally pop up in local society pages. Based on nuggets that ran after Falcone's arrest, their standing has not been tarnished by his legal difficulties. In the April 2001 issue of *Arizona Trends*, a magazine filled with ads for Feng Shui consultants, plastic surgeons, anti-aging treatments and day spas, then-publisher Danny Medina recounted his lunch with Sonia Falcone: "She was perfectly stunning with a great personality and rich, rich, rich. Oy! You should have seen the square cut diamond on her hand!"

In May, *Scottsdale Life*, a glossy freebie sent to selected area homes with an assessed value of \$250,000 or more, featured a cover story on the Falcones' new estate. It spoke of bedroom

JUDITH NGUYEN/REUTERS

suites that "bear the imprimatur of Sonia's exquisite taste," of the Vera Wang evening gowns hanging in her 1,100-square-foot closet, and of her devotion to family and friends. ("And, yes, it does help to have a butler, cook, domestic help, chauffeurs and an army of nannies to help out.")

Like many Paradise Valley residents, the Falcones are regulars on the local black-tie charity circuit and contribute generously to organizations such as the American Heart Association, Phoenix Children's Memorial Center and the Kids in a Korner Foundation. During my stay in Arizona, Sonia attended a fundraiser for the American Cancer Society at Marriott's Camelback Inn resort. After dining on pinenut-crusted filet of beef and wild-mushroom risotto, attendees bid at auction on donated items such as a week at the Hacienda del Mar in Cabo San Lucas, a variety of golfing packages and diamond jewelry.

Sonia, who declined to be interviewed for this story, was accompanied to the fundraiser by Jason Rose, a Phoenix PR man and Republican political consultant whom she has retained to tell her husband's side of the Angolagate story. The son of a prominent area family, Rose is a rising star in GOP circles. He knows the Falcones from local social and political circles ("They're cool people who you'd like to have a drink with") and argues that Pierre is the victim of a French legal system that deems people "guilty until proven innocent."

In addition to charity, the Falcones have also taken an interest in politics. In June 2000, the couple hosted a fundraiser at their home for Scott Bundgaard, a Republican state senator and close ally of President Bush. (Bundgaard endorsed Bush over native son John McCain during last year's GOP primaries and was a major fundraiser for his campaign.) The affair attracted political luminaries such as Gov. Jane Hull and several members of Arizona's congressional delegation, as well as Jean-Christophe Mitterand.

Sonia Falcone was also a donor to the Bush campaign, and pictures of her with the president and first lady, snapped at political functions in Arizona, hang in her home. During the summer of 2000, Bundgaard invited Sonia to join a small local entourage that greeted then candidate Bush at the Phoenix airport when he flew in for a campaign event. Most of Sonia's political contributions came from the coffers of Essante, her Utah-based health and beauty firm. The company gave \$20,000 to the Republican Party in May 2000 and another \$80,000 in November. Sonia Falcone has insisted that her husband had no connection to Essante and that the company's political contributions came out of corporate profits. She made the donations, she says, to increase Latino awareness in the Republican Party. (The GOP returned the contributions following Pierre's detention—"to avoid the appearance of impropriety," in the words of a statement issued by the Republican National Committee.)

Yet Essante was incorporated in Delaware on April 6, 1994 with Sonia as its founding president and one of two directors—the other was Pierre Falcone. He no longer holds that title, but the firm's accountant until just recently was Henry Guderley, who fills the same position for the London offices of Brenco International. More significantly, Essante, which has been losing money for the past seven years, has no profits from which to make political contributions. Essante publicist Lee Solters—a legendary Hollywood PR agent whose clients have included everyone from Frank Sinatra and Barbra Streisand to

Pia Zadora and Kato Kaelin—says Essante spent its first six years, and \$6 million, developing its product line. Sales only began in earnest last September, after Essante threw a three-day launch party at the Paris Hotel in Las Vegas.

So who's been footing the bill? A source familiar with the company says Pierre has always provided the money for Essante. "The company has come a long way with Pierre's generosity, but after a few years he'd like to see some profit," this person says. "It rubs him the wrong way, but out of love for his wife he's done it with a smile on his face."

It's possible that Essante's political contributions were spurred by nothing more than Sonia's open desire to be a player in state and national politics. Even after her husband's arrest, she remains active on the Arizona scene and close to several state officials. Last June, Bundgaard accompanied her and several other friends to Washington for a gala affair at the Ritz-Carlton honoring Sharon Stone. A few months later, Sonia appeared at a campaign function for Matt Salmon, an Arizona congressman who's running for governor on the GOP ticket. She called him a "true conservative" and said she planned to help his campaign "any way I can."

But one of the American officials I interviewed suspects that Pierre may have been thinking about Angola's interests when his wife sent \$100,000 to the GOP. As the official noted, businessmen who operate in Angola are expected to support its government back home, and Luanda is eager to cement ties to Washington, which during the Clinton years became its chief international ally and biggest source of foreign investment. Furthermore, dos Santos has reason to be jittery about the policies of George W. Bush, whose father's supported UNITA. In February 2000, just weeks after Bush's inauguration and a few months after Essante sent its final payment to the RNC, two major lobby shops in Washington—Patton Boggs and Daniel J. Edelman—signed contracts that called for them to work to improve U.S.-Angola ties.

Of course, only Falcone himself can offer a full explanation of why his money went to the Bush campaign. Given his current circumstances, chances are he won't be talking anytime soon. ■

Ken Silverstein is a Washington-based reporter who frequently writes about the arms trade. His latest book, *Private Warriors*, a look at the post-Cold War arms trade, was just released in paperback.

IN THESE TIMES.COM

Visit us on the WEB for more.



MOST up-to-the-minute NEWS

searchable **ARCHIVES**

SECURE online SUBSCRIPTIONS

The New America

By G. Pascal Zachary

The tall, white-washed mosque is set back from a busy commercial street that cuts through a densely populated valley east of San Francisco. On a Friday in October, five rows of Afghan men pray in the hot, midday sun. They are mourning the death of an old friend in Hayward, a strip of suburban California that is home to one of the largest concentrations of Afghans in the United States.

In front of their mosque, on top of a 50-foot pole, flies an American flag. The flag went up after September 11. Before then, the Afghans felt no need to advertise their loyalty to America. Things have changed. These Afghans suddenly have a lot to prove. The U.S. government is fighting a self-styled "war on terror," and President Bush has declared that those who fail to help in this war are the enemy.

Along with other immigrants, they are racing to keep pace with the reality of America under threat. The task is complicated because there no longer is a single criterion, if there ever was one, of what it means to be an American. In World War II, Americans jailed law-abiding citizens of Japanese descent as a precaution. Today, Afghans freely criticize the U.S. bombing of their country, and even complain that Islamic extremists have reason to resent America. President Bush, though elected on the strength of his fervent Christianity, has visited a mosque and pointedly says he has no argument with genuine Muslims, only the phony ones who endorse or defend terror.

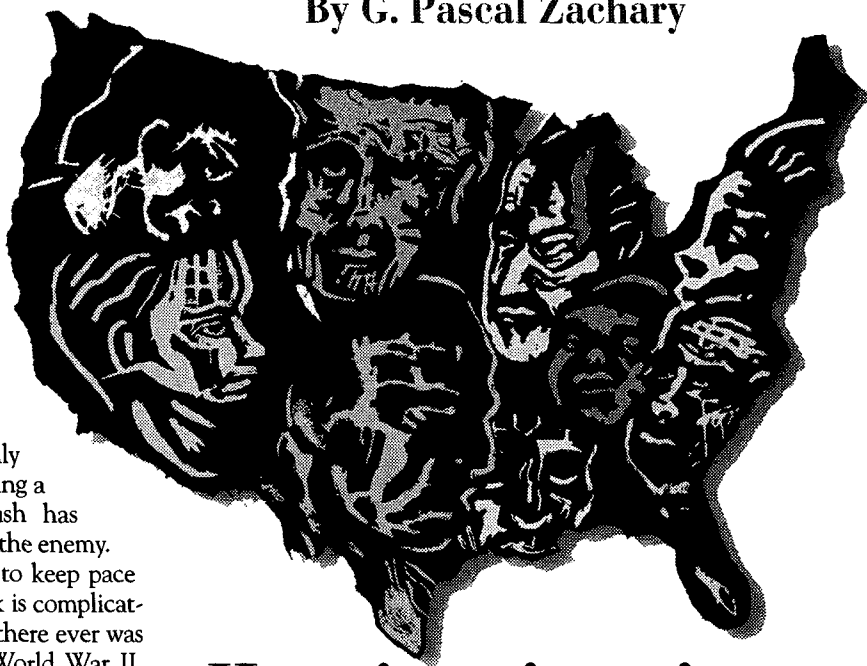
In California—the first state in which ethnic "minorities" comprise the majority—because no ethnic or racial community commands enough of a following, no great pressure exists in the U.S. for subcultures to conform to a single, national ideal.

As the men disperse, their prayers done, three volunteers from a local civil rights group hand out leaflets, telling the Afghans not to speak to any FBI agents without an attorney, which the group will supply as needed. One of the volunteers, Nadia Olmedo, is herself an immigrant, a social worker whose parents are from South America. "People in this country should feel solidarity with Afghans, not fear them," she tells the men.

Her words echo an American motto: *E Pluribus Unum*, "out of many, one." Yet this phrase is deceptively simple. Just how does a society create unity out of diverse peoples?

The United States once imposed uniformity on its people by actively discouraging newcomers from maintaining ties with their homelands or speaking their native languages. Other countries in the world, including Germany, adopted this philosophy of assimilation. One of the outcomes of the civil rights movement was to discredit assimilationist policies.

When the landmark Immigration Act of 1965 opened American borders to immigrants from poorer, developing countries, especially Asia, these newcomers took advantage of the new laissez-faire attitude toward immigrant lifestyles



How immigration is transforming our society

and values. By the early '90s, tolerance of immigrant cultures was so ingrained in U.S. law and social practice that many conservatives and even some liberals complained about "the unraveling of America."

Some unraveling is inevitable, of course. In the past 20 years, more than 20 million foreigners moved—legally—to the United States. While these newcomers energized the country—helping its economy, giving its population a younger, more dynamic cast—they carried costs as well as benefits. The differences among Americans, in short, probably are as great as they were during the last great wave of immigration at the turn of the 20th century. But these differences seem more likely to endure, as immigrants use the Internet, the telephone and easier modes of travel to maintain connections with their native lands.

To be sure, there is something wonderful about the new America. At a Catholic Church not far from this mosque, the congregation consists of people born in Brazil, Nigeria, the Philippines, Mexico and, yes, the United States. Masses are held in Mandarin Chinese, Spanish and Portuguese. Not only are immigrants welcome to worship at St. John the Baptist Church, the priest says, but the parish's survival depends on them.

Father John Maxwell walks his talk, too. One recent Sunday, after mass, the church gymnasium filled up with hundreds of immigrants from Nigeria. They came to attend mass and celebrate the fall harvest with palm wine, roasted chicken and rice.

Father Maxwell capped the event by donning a native Nigerian costume and dancing to frenetic Nigerian music.

Such scenes are a staple of U.S. society. The insistence on "celebrating diversity" is so routine it has become a cliché. A new TV advertisement being shown throughout the United States as a public service depicts dozens of people from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, including Arab-looking men and women, saying proudly, "I am an American."

The ad, designed by an industry group, sends a clear message: *E Pluribus Unum*.

But there is a price to be paid for invoking a mythical unity where real unity does not exist. America is a divided society, a fractured nation. This is the flip-side of the nation's diversity. The very breadth of diversity brings great innovations, but also makes coordination and crisis management more difficult. It is a testimony to America's status as a world culture that hundreds of people from scores of nations died in the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11. But the same senseless violence may also have revived a naïve notion about American unity.

America may be one country, but it isn't one people. The old idea of an America based on a common identity is an anachronism, but one that politicians can't surrender. Therein lies a challenge. No war on terror, no matter how long it lasts, will erase the differences between Americans—and these cherished differences are a chief reason why civil liberties are so valuable. No manner of social-monitoring or suspension of rights envisioned by the Bush administration will be enough to revive assimilationist policies.

President Bush has tried to square this circle by invoking the concept of citizenship. Great diversity will be tolerated among citizens, he seems to say, but not foreigners. Yet citizenship was never intended to be the legal culmination of American identity. After all, immigrants are welcomed precisely because they are not Americans. Their very otherness

is what so energizes the United States, economically, socially and culturally. Immigrant energies are the soil out of which American greatness springs.

This stubborn truth will always intrude on the fantasies of unity that animate Washington politics. But in the illusion of a unified America, the triumph of American multiculturalism could be ratified anew. The United States must respond to its new challenges—security and otherwise—by drawing on the hybrid sources of Americans, not by denying them.

President Bush's challenge—"you're either with us or against us"—defines the current political landscape in ways still dimly perceived. The nation is at war and loyalty is once more at the center of American life. But who is "us"? What is it to be a "good" American in a country where an estimated 60 million Americans were either born in a foreign country or have foreign-born parents?

New ethnic, racial and national identities are being born in what was once called the "melting pot" of America. Only rather than erasing differences, like 100 years ago, the collision of peoples from around the world in the marketplace of America results in, at least for many, a heightened sense of supra-American identity. The hyphenated American of the past (African-American, Jewish-American, Korean-American, Greek-American) has given way to a new model of adaptation, which is for both newcomers and natives to assert multiple identities: to proudly display their Korean-ness and their American-ness, so to speak.

On the following pages, *In These Times* asks a variety of writers and thinkers on the subject of identity to reflect on this New America. What's new and enduring in the way immigrants assimilate and adapt to life in the United States? In what ways do they balance their "roots" and their new attachments? What are the long-term implications for politics and society in America? ■

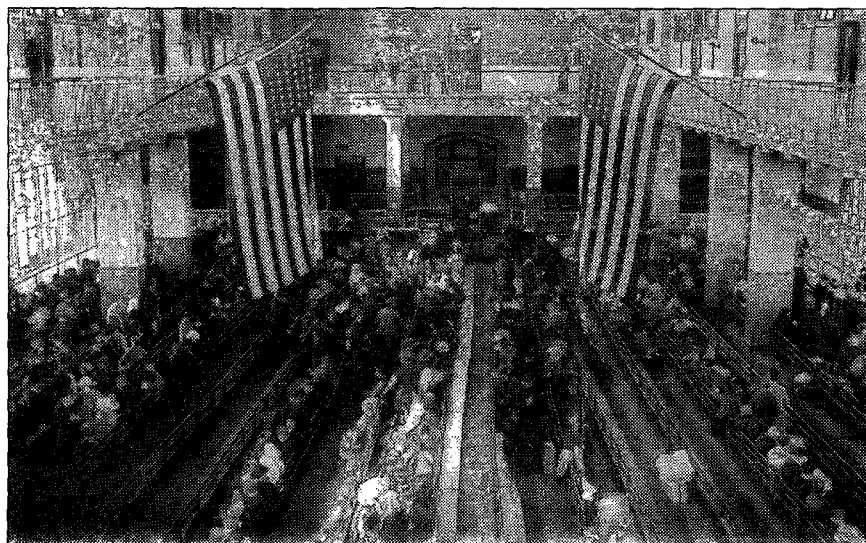
G. Pascal Zachary is a visiting professor of journalism at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of *The Global Me*, on the new world economy.

Harvest of Empire

Multicultural identity is an aspect of U.S. global hegemony, argues social critic and war correspondent David Rieff, whose books include *The Exile: Cuba in the Heart of Miami* and the forthcoming *Humanitarianism*.

The fact that we can have this argument at all without anybody getting killed shows the degree to which the latest American exercise in self-reinvention is working. Because like the debate about multiculturalism, which is one aspect of this larger debate about American identity, these arguments only take place among successful people.

Look at what actually has happened. Between the middle of the 19th century to the 1970s, this country was made up of largely, though not exclusively, white people. That was America. The reference for



Ellis Island at the turn of the last century.

the majority of people was European, and black people had this rather complicated relation between being American and having an extremely tangential relation to Africa.

Then, for many reasons, some intentional and some unintentional, everything changed. The catalyst was the Immigration Reform Act of 1965, although almost certainly the transformation would have taken place anyway. The loosening of immigration restrictions from the nonwhite world coincided with a new global mobility and a population explosion in the poor world. We know the result: The United States went from basically being an anthology of the peoples of Europe and Africa, to being an anthology of the peoples of the world.

This was bound to create all kinds of new cultural expectations. The country had seen itself as a version of Europe—an understandable fantasy when the country was overwhelmingly white. But by the '80s that was no longer true, and thus so-called Eurocentrism made less and less sense, either cognitively or morally.

Of course, to someone like me, who was born in the United States before this happened, this is very striking, even shocking. But this may be the only subject about which I am relatively optimistic. I think the United States has done a remarkable job of making the transition from being a white outcropping of Europe to being this anthology of the peoples of the world.

Americans, particularly middle-class Americans, expect perfection and instant gratification. So they point to all the things that have not worked perfectly yet, to the vestiges of racism, America's unwillingness to fully assimilate other cultures into the official mix. But what strikes me is how much has been done, and with what remarkable ease, given how challenging this is.

Now are there things wrong? Self-evidently. Are there losses from this transition, things we will miss? Again, yes. I'd argue that this transition accelerated the decline of high-culture in this country. I don't think that what has replaced the old, Eurocentric canon has been simply a more inclusive one of high culture—Sanskrit plays, say, as well as Shakespeare, or Tang sculpture as well as Caravaggio.

Rather, what has triumphed is the culture of Hollywood and Burbank, the culture of the lowest common denominator—the culture, if you like, of no culture. This is not the immigrants' fault, obviously. To the contrary, the point about high culture is that it doesn't make money. So it's logical that there was such a profound intersection between multiculturalism and consumerism.

One vantage point from which to see this involves turning the debate away from culture to the world of business. Turn on one of the business TV stations, and you'll see that the commentators are Chinese, South Asian, African. And nobody thinks anything of it. This transition has taken place seamlessly. Even the World Trade Center attacks paradoxically testified to the success of this new American paradigm. Look at the number of Third World people who died there.

The United States is an empire and, like the Roman Empire or the Ottoman Empire, attracts the best and the brightest of the whole world. That wasn't so true of Britain, because 19th century European imperialism was racist. But most empires have not been racist. The history of the United States is racist, but I think the American empire today is not only not racist, it's anti-racist (it's also utterly self-involved, but that's a separate issue). ■

My Inner White Guy

New identities emerge out of an interplay of individual freedom and group pressure. How others view you shapes how you view yourself. Chiori Santiago, a writer in Berkeley, California, is the daughter of a Japanese-American woman who married a white American soldier (of Irish-American extraction). Through the alchemy of ethnicity in California, Santiago self-identified as a Mexican-American, adding a fluency in Spanish and Mexican culture to her skill-set (she has been married twice, to men whose parents were from Puerto Rico). In America, as she explains, identities are fluid—and often in conflict within a single person.

I am my father's daughter. Of his five children, I am the one who copied his mannerisms and inherited his compulsions, his bluster, his sense of rightness. Once, in a time I sense more than truly remember, I was supremely in love with myself, the way my father has always been. My father explained that I was his equal, and my inner-self developed in his image; confident, even arrogant, although in adulthood I've learned these qualities are dangerous in someone who looks as I do.



Immigrants being sworn in as U.S. citizens in Los Angeles.

I don't physically resemble my father at all. I am short and brown, with the compact sturdiness of my mother's Japanese ancestors, but none of their grace; I have a body meant for stooping over crops and birthing babies in the fields, the sort of occupation reserved for those of literally low stature. In his

prime, my father was a skinny six-foot-two, a handsome cross between Gregory Peck and Marshall Matt Dillon, with blue eyes, a shell-pink complexion and a head of jet-black, curly hair. His appearance had the force of magic in my infant mind. Doors literally opened for him.

I remember a visit to his office when I was a short-legged 10-year-old trotting to keep up with his lanky stride. As we approached the glass tower, the huge doors swung open. "G'morning, Mr. MacPherson," the doorman said, smiling. My father nodded, lost in thought as his long limbs propelled him toward the elevators.

I surged eagerly toward that shining portal, eager for the same royal treatment. The doorman gazed at me. His features collapsed into a wrinkle of distaste. He emphatically pushed the door closed. I pressed my nose against it like the urchin he thought I was, yelling "Daddy!" through the thick plate glass.

My father turned at the elevators, looking for me, slightly annoyed. Spotting me outside, he gestured to the doorman. "It's OK," he said. "She's my daughter."

The doorman's eyes sauced in disbelief, moving from my father to me and back again as he inched the door open. For the first time I realized that, solely on the basis of appearance, I, my father's doppelgänger, his favorite child, the one with his aspirations embedded in my DNA, would never live in his universe and that he could never understand the reality of mine.

Yet the white man I internalized as a child lives on. As I go about my day, stoic in the face of the thousand wearying obstacles brown people must hurdle, he squirms like an alien pod creature trying to burst from my chest in fury. When someone asks why I speak English so well, he silently screams: "I was born here, idiot!" When an editor rejected my story ideas because "Mexicans don't read our newspaper," I had to fight to shush my white dude's indignant flood of invective. He expects the doors of approval to open without hesitation; he's shocked when, instead, we're tailed by the security guard.

The inner white guy cries for justice, but not too loudly. After all, if he's too vocal about his identity around his minority brethren, he'll get his brown ass kicked. Miscegenation has ugly historical connotations for most people of color, so one shouldn't squawk too loudly about the *ofays* hiding in the family tree. Yet the promise that has drawn so many to this land is that anyone has the opportunity to become, in effect, a white guy. The punchline is: It's extremely difficult to earn the props of a white guy unless you actually look like a white guy. Privilege is a reward of perception; fighting to be perceived as worthy of white-guy status is so exhausting.

I hardly speak to my father these days. My siblings and I couldn't quite overcome the consequences of our color, and I think he finds that painful. After my parents' divorce, we children were tired out by no-good-reason police stops, decrepit housing, stern caseworkers and the other pinpricks of societal suspicion. Some of us, briefly, became the shoplifting juvenile delinquents everyone expected us to be. My father now lives in a comfortable, familiar, predominantly white world that I don't visit.

Not that I regret it; for all that brown folks put up with, we

are the most loving, resilient people I can imagine, and belonging there is a privilege worth every molecule of melanin I possess. But I do feel for the white guy who believed men like himself would love his half-breed children, would recognize the qualities he observed with such pride, and he hurts to admit that so many of them cannot. ■



Children salute the flag in a New York public school early in the 20th century.

American Identity Inc.

Corporate capitalism inevitably shapes the emergence of new American identities—and presents them to the world as global styles or trends worthy of consumption. Born in Singapore and educated in Holland and New York, novelist Hwee Hwee Tan is ethnically Chinese. Her acclaimed first novel, Foreign Bodies, looked at the coming of age of a Singaporean woman. Her latest book, Mammon Inc., tells the story of a young woman hired by a multinational corporation to broker between cultures.

The old mold of an American has broken down: New identities, subcultures and affiliations are proliferating. What unifies America? Consumer culture, pop culture. The new American is a creature of capitalism in its globalized form.

I was raised in Singapore, educated in Britain and the Netherlands, and published my first novel while living in the United States. I got my education about America from Oprah. Don't wince. You can't underestimate pop culture as a unifying force in America. I am 26 years old, and my statement is especially true for younger people. As pop culture goes global, American identity becomes an international identity.

But that's the problem with American identity. As America's global ambitions grow, American identity

becomes so homogenized, so generic. It becomes like an assembly line. Everyone watching *Friends*. This is sad, pathetic in some ways. But without the unifying power of pop culture, does the whole notion of America and of American identities split apart, vanish?

How did America get to this point? You can't underestimate the influence of big business. Huge media companies hold sway and they suck creative people into their network. You get subsumed into a corporate identity and lose your own identity. In the end, big business has more of an influence on American identities than ethnic roots.

That's one of the reasons I went back to Singapore. I was very lonely in New York as an immigrant. It's hard to make connections with people. It's difficult to find roots in New York, whereas in Singapore there is a kind of rootedness. Which is strange for me to say since Singapore tries to take the best of the West and blend it with the East, which means my friends actually laugh at the right times during a Woody Allen movie.

Beyond the surface consumption—and the global brands and styles—there remains something uniquely American, I think. Greed and desire for sex and power is what links all Americans. And that cuts across all ethnic racial differences and unites people. Americans, new and old, want to be successful. Americans want to be rich and loved, too. Perhaps I am completely cynical about Americans, and those who come to your country wanting to stay, but my sense is that Americans will adopt whatever identity they need to get what they want. ■



Assimilation Tango

Rubén G. Rumbaut is a professor of sociology at the University of Michigan and co-author of *Legacies: the Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. Rumbaut's research on immigrants and their children, conducted since 1991 with Princeton Professor Alejandro Portes, reveals a paradox: By traditional measures, immigrants are assimilating much in the same way as they always have, but these new Americans don't feel part of mainstream America.

The history of America is a history of immigration—so much of what we see today is not new. The whole notion of ethnic politics, for instance, is linked to the mass migrations of the 19th century. You cannot speak of religion in the United States, certainly not about the Catholic Church, without speaking of immigration. Virtually every institution in the United States has been shaped by immigration; virtually every aspect of American life bears the stamp of immigrant origins.

In the past 20 years, we've seen a new wave of immigration to the United States: There are 30 million foreign-born people in the country; another 30 million people have one foreign-born parent. That's 22 percent of our population with a parental link to another land. That's astonishing. What's new about these people is that they don't come from Europe, but from Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, Africa. This level of diversity is unprecedented. A significant component of these immigrants are very highly skilled professionals and

managers, which means that for virtually every indicator the highest and lowest ranks are made up of immigrants: education, incomes, home ownership, fertility.

So this is a complex story—immigration and American identity—but you can parse it and sort it out. The whole business of transnationalism, much in vogue lately, is overwhelmingly a first-generation phenomenon. The children of immigrants are becoming Americans in a hybridized way, but they are still quintessentially Americans. They really don't know the country of their origins. I call them "genealogical tourists."

On the other hand, there are limits to assimilation. Assimilation is like a tango: It takes two. Immigrants or their children can become acculturated, but they won't become assimilated unless they are allowed to do so. This explains the apparent paradox of why African-Americans—who should be assimilated because they are English-speaking Protestants—have never been assimilated, because society would not allow it. Assimilation occurs only when prejudice and discrimination on the part of the dominant group fades.

Portes and I have looked at a large sample of children of immigrants from 77 different countries. They live in Florida or California. What our data show is that these kids switch very rapidly to English, losing the language of their parents very quickly. It is extremely difficult to remain a fluent bilingual in the United States, so assimilation into English is rapid. Given this, when you ask these kids, "Who are you?" you'd expect them to say they are Americans or at least hyphenated-Americans. Yet we find exactly the opposite. Language is one direction but identity boomerangs. A kid says he's Haitian and can't even tell you who the president of Haiti is. They don't know, and they don't care. ■

The African-American Exception

By Salim Muwakkil

The terror attacks of September 11 have forced many African-Americans to re-evaluate and revise their feelings about the United States. Many shared the conclusions of *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist Mary Mitchell, an African-American, who wrote two days following the attack, "In the aftermath of Tuesday's devastation, how I see myself and how others see me no longer matters. I am an American."

A sense of shared victimhood has fastened many black Americans tighter to the notion of citizenship. This is not an odd attachment. From the initial tumult that created this nation, blacks have placed their hopes on America's egalitarian promise. Thousands of black troops fought for the Continental Army in the Revolutionary War, even though the British offered them freedom. Victory gave birth to the United States but meant nearly another century of chattel slavery and racist exclusion.

A pattern was set that has perplexed black patriots ever since. African-Americans' ambivalent attitudes about the values of American citizenship are a natural product of this historical pattern. But the question of political citizenship is perhaps less important to black Americans' well being than that of cultural citizenship.

African-Americans are a unique people, with a hybrid identity that is not just dual but dueling. Socialized in a culture that routinely devalued their humanity (indeed, had an economic stake in maintaining a strict racial hierarchy), African-Americans have been preoccupied by what W.E.B. Du Bois

famously described as a "double-consciousness." In his landmark 1903 book, *Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois wrote, "One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."

Of course, African-Americans had nothing to do with the social construction of their "blackness"; it was imposed from outside by the logic of white supremacy. Their racial identity was ineluctably connected to their social status. The "one-drop" rule racialized anyone with even a wispy genetic connection to Africa. This wiped out the biological reality of black Americans' racial hybridity, primarily because that hybridity implicated rich, white men. The Census Bureau's recent attempt to accommodate citizens' desire to pay homage to their heterogeneity is, in some ways, a reflection of these earlier evasions. African-Americans are already a mixed race.

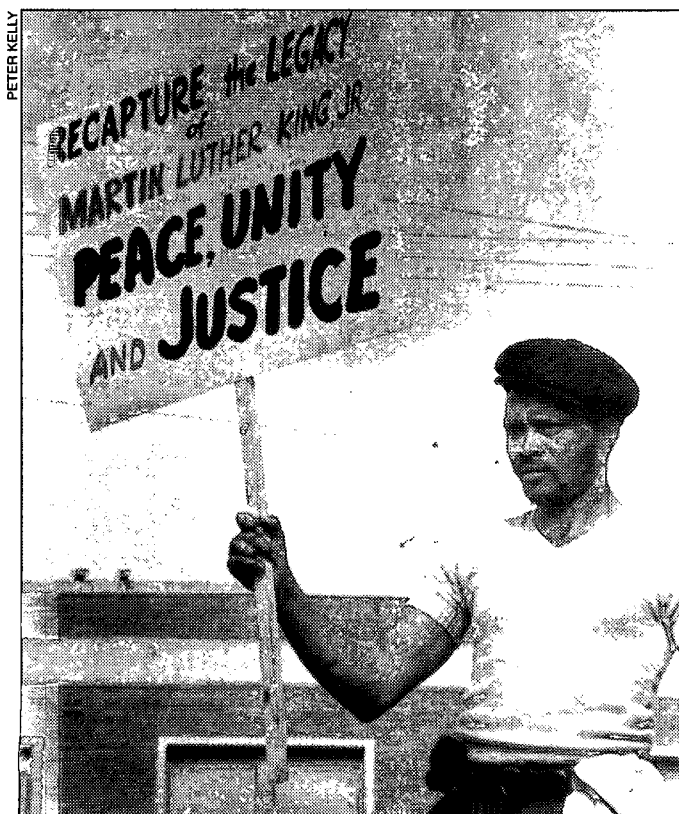
One of the most debilitating legacies of slavery, and the white supremacy promoted to rationalize it, is its lingering affect on the "cultural esteem" of black Americans. The caste-like designation of black people produced a cultural development common to outcasts in other societies. Invariably these populations (Dalits in India, Tamils in Sri Lanka, Roma in Eastern Europe) hover near the lower end on indices of social well-being, including lifespan and rates of unemployment, incarceration, morbidity and mortality, etc.

The barriers of racial exclusion and cultural isolation are normally cited as the primary social obstacles to African-Americans. Yet I'm convinced that the failure to reconcile Du Bois' "warring ideals" underlies every aspect of life for those Americans who are here only because they were needed to "tote-that-barge-and-lift-that-bale." The nation's social institutions historically have been angled against black Americans, and surely they account for some of the racial disparity in resource allocation. But those traditions of social exclusion are not, I believe, the primary reasons for black miseries today.

Many Americans assume that the civil rights movement opened society to the point where racial discrimination was no longer an overt problem. This assessment, though increasingly common, is one that omits the unfinished business of African-American socialization. What's more, it ignores the trope of "whiteness," the cultural fountain sustaining those Afro-phobic assumptions that actively retard black Americans' social mobility.

Unless some sense of context is maintained, newly arriving immigrants will lack any understanding of African-Americans' historical trajectory. They won't understand that we've inherited a culture racialized specifically to exclude the descendants of enslaved Africans from mainstream participation.

This legacy has thrust special concerns about identity on African-Americans that serve to reinforce Du Bois' prescient prognosis about the need to reconcile "warring ideals." Until this struggle is quieted, it will continue to cripple America's national potential. Until we address the issue with sufficient resources, that internal conflict will cloud the agenda—no matter what external wars America declares. ■



PETER KELLY

Where the Sun Never Sets

By J.W. Mason

It's a rare book of Marxist political theory that gets a mention in *Newsweek*, let alone a glowing page-and-a-half review. Though it sits uneasily next to the two special issues of *Rethinking Marxism* devoted to the book, the

Empire

By Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri
Harvard University Press
504 pages, \$18.95

Newsweek squib was representative of the response to *Empire*, which has made remarkable inroads into the more theory-averse precincts of American intellectual life in the nearly two years since its publication. For better and for worse, it captures well a major strand in today's political thinking.

Empire, a collaboration between jailed Italian Communist Antonio Negri and American literary theorist (and, one feels, junior partner) Michael Hardt, is an attempt, probably the most fully realized to date, at a Marxist read on globalization. Unlike many anti-globalizers, North and South, they vigorously reject any suggestion that a return to the world of autonomous nation-states is possible.

They accept the new world order—with

its global economy, global culture and global police actions—as a given, and, taking the longest of long views, seek out the new possibilities it opens up for human liberation.

The book divides into three strands. The first is a new kind of global sovereignty, replacing that of the nation-state. The second, and least interesting, is what they take to be the economics of Empire, a highly conventional account of “globalization” that could be excerpted comfortably in *The Economist* or *Financial Times*. The third is the possibilities for resistance or revolution opened up by the new order.

By “Empire,” Hardt and Negri mean a new political order that is replacing the competing nation-states of the past 500 years. The nation is supposed to have an organic unity rooted in the mists of history; states are defined by the territory they control. Empire, by contrast, lacks boundaries and is potentially all-inclusive. Empire also lacks any center: Unlike the imperialism of the past, under Empire one cannot even approximately separate the exploiters from the exploited with lines on a map.

This vision is sketched out at a very high level of abstraction and seems

in the name of global right.” As Hardt and Negri don't quite acknowledge, all U.S. imperial wars, from the Spanish-American on, have been conducted “in the name of global right.” But today, as they insist in one of the book's defining if not most original passages, rhetoric has become, or replaced, reality. Hardt and Negri see the language of human-rights interventions not as cynical window-dressing but as their real content: Police power is the signature of Empire. And as in any well-run police state, police actions soon induce the victims to police themselves, so the universal rights on

which military interventions are based are incorporated into national legislation everywhere. “Armies and police anticipate the courts” in “an inversion of the conventional order of constitutional logic.”

What distinguishes this new situation from the old international order, dating back to the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, which effectively introduced the modern nation-state, is that the internal affairs of states are no longer clearly marked off as a sphere apart under international law. Once the principle is accepted that interventions across borders are legitimate on human-rights grounds, a system of global law has been

acknowledged even if

the bodies that will codify and adjudicate it have not yet been formed.

It's not unfair to say that Hardt and Negri don't present a single piece of evidence for any of their claims. *Empire* is a book of visions, not arguments. Either you accept them or you don't. Still, isn't there something to it? If the logic of human-rights imperialism isn't as profoundly new as they would like, it remains a departure from the Cold War understanding of international relations.

The real heart of the book—the passages that now help to inspire the Seattle movement—is its political pro-



SCOTT NEISTADT

rather obviously contradicted by the reality of unchallenged U.S. supremacy that we all read about in the papers. But Hardt and Negri rightly insist that the content of a military intervention can't always be settled by looking at the insignia on the uniforms. While nation-states always acted, covertly or overtly, in their own national interests, today's interventionists, whether they know it or not, are compelled to serve an incipient transnational order.

The Gulf War was perhaps the first war of this kind. There the United States found itself compelled to act “not as a function of its own national motives but

gram, if the word applies to something so slithery and acephalous. There are probably half a dozen initiates of Italian political philosophy who can follow *Empire's* every twist and turn; the rest of us will have to skim a bit. But if one isn't deterred by discursive meanders, unde-

***Empire's* vision has no place for trade unions or other progressive groups that arise to exercise real power.**

defined terms and the annoying insistence on the absolute, unprecedented newness of it all, the broad outlines are clear enough and even, in a way, compelling.

In opposition to Empire Hardt and Negri place "the multitude," a term carefully chosen and distinguished from "nation" or even "people," which are blinds for power. To speak of the will of the people, they insist, is to postulate a uniformity that inevitably does violence to the aspirations it supposedly embodies. The multitude is defined by its heterogeneity; it is simply the many, the sum of numerous distinct human "singularities." The essence of political struggle is the effort of authority—whether capital, nation-state or Empire—to assimilate this heterogeneity into a single will.

Naturally, this rejection of traditional political identities—class as firmly as nation—leads to a rejection of traditional political movements. The struggles of oppressed peoples are, at best, progressive until they win institutional form. Genet's romantic attachment to the Palestinians as history's losers—"The day the Palestinians become a nation like the other nations, I will no longer be there"—is paradigmatic. Similarly for workers: "Against the common wisdom that the U.S. proletariat is weak because of its low party and union representation," they write, "perhaps we should

see it as strong for precisely those reasons. Working-class power resides not in the representative institutions but in the antagonism and autonomy of the workers themselves."

Don't even get them started on meliorative state action like progressive taxes or workplace regulation: The New Deal was an attempt to institute the "factory society." And today, in "imperial post-modernity," "big government has become merely the despotic means of domination and the totalitarian production of subjectivity." In short, the essential conflict is not between nations or classes, but between the heterogeneous wills of human singularities and any system that would, however benevolently, reduce them to objects or instruments.

Hardt and Negri trace the origins of this conflict to the Renaissance, when people came to believe that the material world was not a reflection of divine will but self-contained reality, and that individuals had the power to make creative choices unconstrained by any prior or external law. Human beings were unique, their choices fundamentally indeterminate. Spinoza was exemplary

of this sensibility. The old Spanish mystic is *Empire's* hero because of his refusal to acknowledge any constraints on this freedom, even physical survival: "A free man thinks about nothing less than death," they approvingly quote.

The logic here is tight: Spinoza's assertion of human creative powers requires his indifference to death, since death—and more generally the desire for peace and security—is the weapon states use to "blackmail" the multitude back into subordination. In a moment of brilliant condescension, Stendhal once said that a peasant wants only two things: a warm winter coat and not to be killed. On these terms a man's a man; one is interchangeable with another. In their sketch of the origins of the modern nation-state, Hardt and Negri can't conceal their impatience with the masses who, unlike Spinoza, could not stop thinking about death and how to avoid it.

Indifference to death is setting the bar for political virtue pretty high. Combined with the sweeping dismissal of all the fundamentals of the 19th and 20th century left movements, one might suspect *Empire* of being just another anti-political, end-of-history tract. This isn't quite the case:



Central azucarera "Uruguay," Ciego de Avila, 1970, by Enrique de la Uz, from the exhibit Shifting Tides: Cuban Photography after the Revolution, on view from January 12 through March 9 at the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College, Chicago.

Hardt and Negri do advocate a sort of political judo, in which the logic of Empire is turned against its masters. Empire is based on universal rights and the erosion of national boundaries, they argue, so let's assert the universal right to cross boundaries, to migrate: "The general right to control its own movement is the multitude's ultimate demand for global citizenship." That is almost the only concrete demand put forward in the book.

Though the master is hardly cited, *Empire* is a strictly Foucauldian work. From the complexities of Foucault's writing Hardt and Negri, like many on the left, have extracted an unrelenting suspicion of any formal organization or assertion of collective identity as only a more subtle form of domination. Instead, "lateral connections" and "networks of relays" must somehow replace democratic government and all other forms of delegated authority. Hardt and Negri are right to warn against the spurious unities of national or indigenous culture, but the Foucauldian lens constrains vision as well as sharpens it. *Empire* has no place for organizations and leaders that arise out of oppressed groups and exercise power on their behalf, including trade unions, socialist politicians as well as problematic but undoubtedly progressive organizations like the African National Congress or Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition.

In the course of interring the last two centuries of progressive politics, Hardt and Negri invoke the Abbé Sieyès' objection to the French Revolution of Robespierre, which sought to subject all aspects of human life, even the most private, to the general will. For Hardt and Negri, this is a prescient warning against attempts to impose a false unity on the multitude. But this isn't quite right: Like so many defenders of limited government since, Sieyès' goal wasn't to defend individual freedom in the abstract, but to deny the power of the collective to interfere with a particular set of privileges.

There is a real danger that by dismissing class as a basis for collective action, Hardt and Negri are simply opening the way for an older set of identities based on individualism and private privilege to go unchallenged. It's worth remembering that Negri made his political bones in the noontide of the '60s, when the great challenge was pushing up

against the limits of social democracy and Keynesian economics. Today, he is too quick to dismiss the possibilities of national economic regulation.

More generally, *Empire*'s focus on what has changed ignores all the things that have not. One hundred and fifty years ago, Marx was already appalled at the way capital converts unique human beings into interchangeable instruments of production. But while this alienation may operate everywhere, that doesn't mean it has no center or source. Marx emphasized the importance of looking behind the formal equality of the marketplace to relations within the workplace, that zone of authority and subjugation that one may enter "only on business." Hardt and Negri by contrast make a conscious choice to limit themselves to surfaces: "The depths of the modern world and its subterranean passageways have in postmodernity all become superficial."

But never mind Marx. *Empire* is troubling on a more basic level. If Empire has no center and no weak links, if any struggle has the capacity to "leap vertically, to the virtual center of Empire," then how does one distinguish actions

that matter from those that don't? Hardt and Negri seem to be rejecting the very idea of political strategy. One might conclude: Forget about strikes and revolutions. The conversation in the coffeeshop, the day one calls in sick from work, the evening's sarcastic defiance of the anchorman, tonight's insurrectionary sex might just be the blow that brings Empire to its knees.

There is no question that the secret of *Empire*'s success is its denigration of traditional forms of collective politics (along with its contrarian pro-Americanism). Rather than the "discipline of liberation," they valorize individual desertion, the Bartleby's who "would prefer not to." It is possible, I suppose, that everything has changed, and that the great political projects of the 19th and 20th centuries are all dead. But *Empire* hardly makes a convincing case for this. As the B-2s roar out of Whiteman, Missouri on their global police actions, neither Empire nor *Empire* seems to offer much of a way forward. ■

J.W. Mason is a freelance writer in Amherst, Massachusetts.

The Empty Theater

By Heather McCabe

Joan Didion was just starting out on the campaign trail in 1988. Even though it was her first time covering a presidential election, she had other things on her mind; she was

Political Fictions

By Joan Didion

Knopf

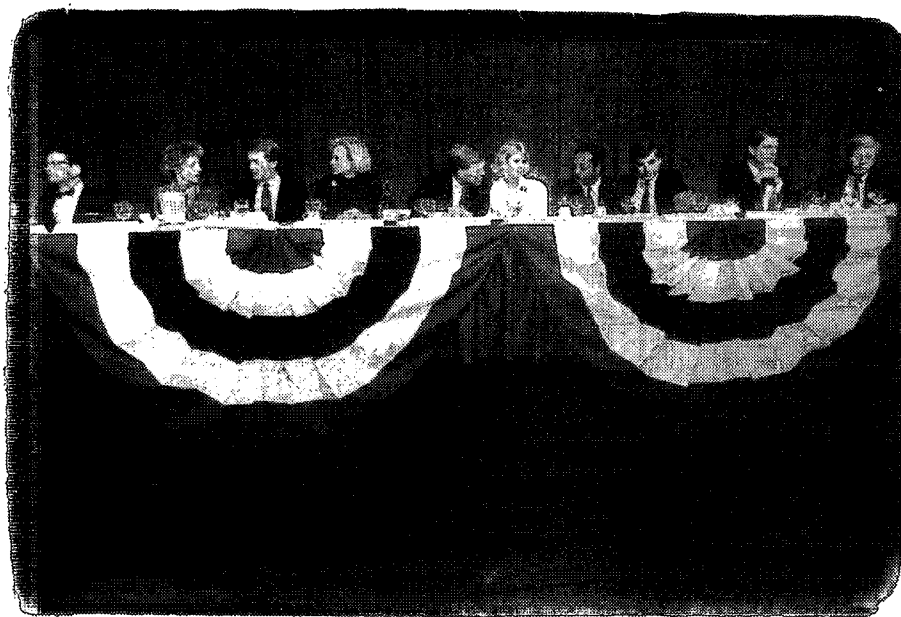
338 pages, \$25

buying an apartment in New York and moving from California. Clippings, books and campaign schedules kept arriving from her editors at *The New York Review of Books*, but Didion was distracted by packing, unpacking and domestic negotiations. "I kept getting new deadlines from *The New York Review*, but there remained about domestic politics some occult irreconcilability that kept all news of it just below my attention level." The stakes of the election, Didion writes, "did not compute."

Didion has plenty of experience commenting from the sidelines, as she has so famously done on the feminist movement (*The White Album*) or Haight-Ashbury in the '60s (*Slouching Towards Bethlehem*). But this time much of America has been right there with her—taking care of domestic arrangements, working or doing whatever, letting the campaign fall below the radar, keeping it out of the living room and in most cases not even bothering to cast a vote.

And after politics spent more than a decade on the backburner, George W. Bush "won" an election that he did not in fact win. Didion writes of the Sisyphean aspect to covering politics: "Even that which seemed ineluctably clear would again vanish from collective memory, sink traceless into the stream of collapsing news and comment cycles that had become our national River Lethe."

PHOTO: BILL STAMETS



The uninspiring Dems of '88.

Of course, as everyone knows, things have changed since September 11. But how? If Bush's murky win hadn't quite vanished from collective memory before, it certainly has by now. America, rightly so, feels a renewed need for its government, but it's also more eager than ever to forget how the members of that government got to be where they are.

While Didion wasn't alone in tuning out during coverage of the 1988 election—roughly 80 percent of Americans didn't watch the Democratic or Republican conventions on TV—she is of the rare breed (virtually extinct inside establishment Washington circles) to chronicle and dissect the reasons why.

On the Saturday morning before the November 2000 election, a front page story in the *Washington Post* concluded: "Apathy is the single biggest reason why an estimated 100 million Americans will not vote on Tuesday." That conclusion was based on polls conducted by the *Post* and the Joan Shorenstein Center's "Vanishing Voter Project" at Harvard. Didion, however, drew some different conclusions from the graphs that accompanied the story.

Only 35 percent of nonvoters, or 17 percent of all Americans, were classified as "apathetic." Others fell into the categories of people who cannot physically make it to the polls; people who recent-

ly changed addresses and therefore were not registered; and those who were "alienated" or "disenchanted," people who were "repelled" or "disgusted" by the way politics is practiced. The last

"Even that which seemed ineluctably clear would again vanish from collective memory, sink traceless into the stream of collapsing news cycles."

class is pretty much the opposite of apathetic, Didion notes. She further points out that more than 70 percent of all nonvoters were actually registered, "a figure that cast some ambiguity on the degree of 'apathy' even among the 35 percent categorized as 'apathetic.'"

Didion goes on to prove, based on the poll results, that the only distinguishing characteristic between voters and nonvoters was on specific policy issues. Voters tended to want to see the federal budget surplus fund a tax cut; nonvoters tended to want the surplus to go toward health, welfare and education. "Nonvoters have different needs,"

the *Post* article said, "but why should politicians listen?"

This question leads to a key argument in Didion's thesis:

The "true story" of the 2000 campaign was that the Republican and Democratic parties had at last achieved "parity," which meant that they were now positioned to split the remaining electorate, those "middle- and upper-middle-class Americans" who would be the dominant voters of the Information Age. In other words we had reached the zero-sum point toward which the process had been moving, the moment in which the determination of the Republican Party to maximize its traditional low-turnout advantage was perfectly matched by the determination of the Democratic Party to shed any association with its traditional low-income base.

That some other explanation was needed for politicians' fine-tuning of the political system to eliminate risk brought on this prevailing notion of rampant apathy. Something very similar took place with Kenneth Starr's investigation and the impeachment of Bill Clinton. A majority of Americans thought that a chapter in the president's sex life was a non-issue. But to the political class, the public was "too fixed on the Dow Jones" or morally spoiled to appreciate the gravity of the graphic images at hand. The public, "we heard repeatedly, would cast off their complicity when they were actually forced by the report of the independent counsel to turn their attention from the Dow and face what Thomas L. Friedman, in the *Times*, called 'the sordid details that will come out from Ken Starr's investigation.'"

That never happened, and the American people were labeled hedonistic, materialistic, individualistic, driven by popular culture and therefore unable to recognize a momentous event in history. The conclusion was that the public was quite literally wearing the scarlet letter—"A" for Apathy—and that the people, if not publicly humiliated, should at least be "remoralized."

Didion is describing a process at work, a process that is "not about 'the democratic process,' or the general mechanism affording the citizens of a

state a voice in its affairs, but the reverse: a mechanism seen as so specialized that access to it is correctly limited to its own professionals, to those who manage policy and those who report on it ... to that handful of insiders who invent, year in and year out, the narrative of public life."

This was not such a recent phenomenon. But "what was recent was the extent to which the movement crusade to save America from its citizens would come to be acquiesced in by, which is to say aided and abetted by, that small but highly visible group of people who, day by day and through administration after administration, relay Washington to the world, tell its story, agree among themselves upon and then disseminate its narrative." Simply put, the nation's media—and Didion points to some of the most prominent and respected stars—flaked on the job.

Since September 11, some commentators have declared that now everything is different in the media too. Even *The Nation's* Jonathan Schell, while largely agreeing with Didion's analysis in his review of *Political Fictions* for the *Washington Post*, wrote that "The deeply silly period of American politics has now ended. ... The attacks that brought down the World Trade Center and penetrated the Pentagon have fallen like a curtain on the epoch [Didion] describes, relegating it to history."

But is the epoch really over? As much as some might wish, there's really no indication that September 11 has changed what Didion calls the "nation's permanent professional political class." Indeed, events rather have reaffirmed Didion's arguments. On October 8, the day after the United States started to bomb targets in Afghanistan, NPR's *Morning Edition* host Bob Edwards asked Cokie Roberts about her perspective on the attacks from Washington.

"Leaders of Congress were quick to issue a statement in support of the military action in Afghanistan," he said. "Were there any dissenters?"

"None that matter," Roberts replied.

A similar arrogance, naïve in the sense that responsibility for its wide-sweeping actions never clings after the fact, was in evidence in 1986, when George H.W. Bush, as vice president, spent several days in Israel and

Jordan. Thirty-four photo ops were set up in Israel, including shots at the Western Wall and the Holocaust memorial. In Jordan the photo ops and television camera shoots were so meticulously prepared by the Bush advance team that the tour resembled a Hollywood set. Didion writes:

Members of the advance team had requested, for example, that the Jordanian army marching band change its uniforms from white to red. They had requested that the Jordanians, who did not have enough equipment to transport Bush's traveling press corps, borrow the necessary helicopters to do so from the Israeli air force. In an effort to assure the color of live military action as a backdrop for the vice president, they had asked the Jordanians to stage maneuvers at a sensitive location overlooking Israel and the Golan Heights. They had asked the Jordanians to raise, over the Jordanian base there, the American flag. They had asked that Bush be photographed studying, through binoculars, "enemy territory," a shot ultimately vetoed by the State Department, since the "enemy territory" at hand was Israel. They had also asked, possibly the most arresting detail, that, at every stop in the itinerary, camels be present.

An American embassy official, upset that reports in the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* had revealed these facts, later told Didion, "You didn't hear this, but they didn't write the half of it." That is how the U.S. government has treated countries with which it is now trying so hard to build a coalition to combat terrorism.

With *Political Fictions*, Didion deftly points out that we are spectators of a political narrative that encompasses everything from the quotidian routines of the White House to details of foreign policy, the elements in the narrative choreographed like a campaign where "character" supersedes issues and usurps all analysis. The public's reaction is to that of a movie with an unengaging plot: No one is going to the theater.

The largest political party in America is made up of those who don't vote. As a result, the public is driven further and further away from its role in a true democracy, that form of government that the United States ostensibly endeavors to spread throughout the world. Didion stops just short of asking how long the American public—and the rest of the world for that matter—will silently accept its role in the narrative. ■

Heather McCabe is a freelance writer based in Austin, Texas.

In These Times' 25th Anniversary issue!

Help us celebrate
25 years as an
independent voice
with your show of
support in our
biggest
anniversary
issue yet!



FINAL WEEKS!

Deadline for advertising is January 1.
If you haven't reserved your space,
call (773) 772-0100, ext. 239

or e-mail lbuxton@inthesetimes.com

Terrible Beauty

By Ben Ehrenreich

We have needed Isaac Babel sorely these past few years, during which we've had to depend on the treacly fantasies of Spielberg and Hanks for too much of our understanding of war. We've needed him even more these past few months,

The Complete Works of Isaac Babel
 Edited by Nathalie Babel
 Translated by Peter Constantine
 Norton
 1,072 pages, \$39.95

as carnage has yet again been dressed up as moral crusade. It is hard to think of anyone who has written about war with as much subtlety, honesty and devastating beauty as Babel, whose *Red Cavalry* stories fictionally recount the months that he, a bespectacled Ukrainian Jew, spent riding with a brutal and anti-Semitic Cossack cavalry unit on the Polish front in the Russian Civil War.

Take the first of those stories, "Crossing the River Zbrucz," which begins with the image of the sun "rolling across the sky like a severed head," in which the exhausted narrator finds lodging in a Jewish home, ransacked by the retreating Poles, and lies down next to a sleeping old man. He is awoken by the man's daughter—he has been yelling in his sleep, thrashing about. She pulls back the blanket covering the old man beside him, revealing that "his gullet has been ripped out, his face hacked in two."

"I want you to tell me," she demands, "I want you to tell me where one could find another father like my father in all the world!" There is no comfort here in the glories of brotherhood, sacrifice and duty, only, as Babel put it in his diaries, "unbearable baseness and crime," and the discomforting pleasures of Babel's flawless prose.

Babel has been lost to the world since 1939, when, just 44, he was arrested in Moscow and charged, absurdly, with espionage. His real crime was the honesty of his writing and his refusal to spout

the Stalinist line. It wasn't until 1954 that it was revealed he was dead, shot by a firing squad eight months after his arrest and buried in a mass grave. And it wasn't until 1990 that the details of Babel's secret trial were released. His last recorded words: "I am asking for only one thing—let me finish my work."

Perhaps in part because his life and work were cut so tragically short, and because his name lingered for so many years in oblivion, Babel is not better known in the West. Adored by a relatively tiny cult of serious readers and scholars, in the common imagination Babel has not been elevated into the



Isaac Babel's mugshot from Stalin's dreaded Lubyanka prison, where he was executed in 1940.

pantheon of Russian literary greats, however much he may deserve to join them.

During his lifetime Babel enjoyed an international reputation unmatched by any living Russian writer save his long-time mentor Maxim Gorky, who christened him "the great hope of

Russian literature." *Red Cavalry* was first published in English as early as 1929; other collections of his work have been translated here over the years. Until now, though, his oeuvre has been scattered among different collections, some of them out of print.

The publication of *The Complete Works of Isaac Babel*, edited by Babel's daughter Nathalie, is thus a fairly monumental occasion. Its nearly 1,100 pages include all of his stories, some previously unpublished, his journalism, two chapters of an unfinished novel, his diary, plays and screenplays. The project began in 1998, Nathalie Babel reveals in her foreword, when translator Peter Constantine approached her about publishing the screenplays. Instead they printed all there was to print. Three years is not much time to translate a work of this size and depth, and the haste shows.

Particularly in *Red Cavalry*, the rhythm of Constantine's translation tends to be clunky, his word choices ill-considered. In the story "Salt," for instance, Constantine comes up with this nearly unreadable sentence: "The initiative showed by the fighters who jumped out of the train made it possible for the struggling railroad authorities to emit sighs from their breasts." (Compare Walter Morison's tidier version from 1955: "The initiative of the men that had scrambled out of the coaches gave the insulted railway authorities their breath back.") Such blunders too often deprive Babel's stories of their lyrical punch, sharpening his prose where it should be soft, muddying his metaphors, and failing to live up to his dictum that "no iron spike can pierce a human heart as icily as a period in the right place."

Some of the translations, though, are excellent, especially the later stories. Many of them are complex coming-of-age tales that combine in a few deft moves a simultaneous awakening to sex, cruelty and artistic beauty, as in the tender "In the Basement," which ends with the young narrator weeping and suddenly seeing that "the world of tears was so immense and beautiful that everything except my tears disappeared from before my eyes."

This ability to find beauty amidst squalor is one of the hallmarks of Babel's work. It is, for him, a solemn task to preserve ambiguity and avoid judgement, not to squeeze the world for morals, to save every ounce of splendor the world offers, no matter its origins. In "Pan Apolek," he writes of a drunken old

"No iron spike can pierce a human heart as icily as a period in the right place."

painter who travels the countryside and wins the ire of the Catholic Church for painting religious scenes for pious peasants, with the saints' faces modeled on the peasant's own. "In the most impoverished and foul-smelling hovels," Apolek leaves images of "Josephs with gray hair neatly parted in the middle, pomaded Jesuses, many-childed village Marys with parted knees." Babel writes: "I took a solemn oath to follow the example of Pan Apolek. The sweetness of dreamy malice, the bitter contempt for the swine and dogs among men, the flame of silent and intoxicating revenge—I sacrificed them all to this oath."

He follows through on his vow, portraying the sensual joys of living without papering over the miseries that shadow them. One of the most salient images in the collection comes at the end of "The Father," one of Babel's wild tales of dashing Jewish gangsters (who reappear in Babel's plays and screenplays) in pre-revolutionary Odessa. Two gangsters walk past a cemetery, plotting extortion and revenge. The story ends with the sentence, "Young men were pulling girls behind the fences, and kisses echoed on the gravestones."

Constantine generally does a better job translating the Odessa stories, and all the stories that rely on a more vernacular style. Babel's 1920 *Diary*, which became the basis for the *Red Cavalry* stories, is very forceful here, recording his steady loss of faith in his Bolshevik ideals. "Why am I gripped by a longing that will not pass?" he asks. "Because I am far from home, because we are destroying, moving forward like a whirlwind, like lava, hated by all, life is being shattered to pieces, I

am at a huge, never-ending service for the dead." And later, "This is not a Marxist Revolution, it is a Cossack uprising that wants to win all and lose nothing."

The exhaustion and revulsion expressed in the diary contrast with the propaganda he simultaneously penned. If in his diaries he admitted that the Red Army's treatment of the Jews was no better than that of the counter-revolutionary Whites, in an article recounting a pogrom conducted by the latter he was nonetheless able to froth: "Slaughter them, Red Army fighters! Stamp harder on the rising lids of their rancid coffins!"

These contradictions survive in the *Red Cavalry* stories, which gain their force from the tension between Babel's alienation from the Cossack soldiers around him, his disgust with their brutality, and his longing to be as strong and cruel as they. In "After the Battle," the narrator (named Lyutov, the alias adopted by Babel to hide his Jewishness from the Cossacks) is cursed for his cowardice by the one Cossack he has managed to befriend. "The village floated and bulged, crimson clay oozing from its gloomy wounds," he writes. "I was exhausted, and, crouching beneath the crown of death, walked on,

begging fate for the simplest ability—the ability to kill a man."

Babel never shies away from war's real horrors, never sweetens them with false sentiment, but neither does he cover over war's pernicious but equally real attractions. Again and again, violence and eros stand disturbingly side by side. In "My First Goose," he admires the brutal figure of his division commander: "I was taken aback by the beauty of his gigantic body. ... His long legs looked like two girls wedged to their shoulders in riding boots."

Elsewhere this awful sensuality resides in the landscape, "A naked corpse lay on the embankment. And the rays of the moon streamed through the dead legs"; and in the universe itself, "The sky changes color—tender blood pouring from an overturned bottle—and a gentle aroma of decay envelops me."

It's not surprising that there is nothing as dangerous as eros, or as subtle as truth, in the discourse surrounding our latest war. Sixty years later, it's hard not to mourn Babel's death, to regret that there's no one around to tear aside the pious lies, to wrench some fragile beauty from this "world of tears." ■

Ben Ehrenreich is a freelance writer based in Los Angeles.

Ghost World

By Julien Lapointe

Growing up through the torturous thrusts and gaps of puberty, we regain a new intimacy in our physical experiences. As in infancy, the world is ours to discover—people look

The Devil's Backbone
Directed by Guillermo del Toro

strange, different and new, as our bodies shift and grow. Ghost stories, a frequent teen-age preoccupation, are about learning to take in your surroundings from an altered angle, knocking on the doors of perception and finding an array of closeted spirits.

Guillermo del Toro's *The Devil's Backbone* makes unexpected and subtle juxtapositions between the blooming of

adolescence and the dread of hidden spirits. The setting is a boys' school, which shelters students whose parents are fighting in the Spanish Civil War. Among the residents is a nocturnally wandering child-ghost, Santi (Junio Valverde), whose mysterious death points to the fissures and tensions of a fraudulently progressive left-wing community. The look and feel of this ambiguous art-house melodrama is rife with suggestive images whose meanings never explicitly cohere: A defused bomb stands wedged in the center of the school's courtyard; in rum-filled jars lie still-born babies, from whose condition of spina bifida, an outwardly-sticking spine, the film derives its title.

The Devil's Backbone has been lauded as "atmospheric," largely because its



Against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War, *The Devil's Backbone* politicizes the ghost story and raises the genre's stakes.

plot loops around ominously and teasingly before taking a rousing leap into anarchy with a climactically staged schoolboy rebellion. The cast of characters includes the newly arrived Carlos (Fernando Tielve), who catches sights of the spectral Santi and is picked on by the deceased's best friend, Jaime (Inigo Garcés). There are several cleverly anticipated plot twists, implicating Jacinto (Eduardo Noriega), a former student who has stuck around to do grub work while tormenting the boys. Meanwhile, the headmistress Carmen (Marisa Paredes) and the paternal Dr. Casares (Federico Luppi), both Republican loyalists, hold on to a hidden loot of gold.

Deep within the film's subtext lies an historical lesson on the infamous war; the symbolism—a defused bomb, still-born babies—implies the notion of arrested development. Until the inspired finale, the kids are a suppressed bunch, caught between the fascistic Jacinto and the orthodox ruling of Carmen. The one redemptive authority figure is Dr. Casares, who in the end gives the kids a helping hand in outwitting their chief enemy.

Bracketing the film with a voice-over prologue and epilogue, Dr. Casares keeps it grounded in reality: Impotent and dispirited, he stands for the war's defeated ideals. In the most

disquieting scene, he downs a rumored elixir for the sexually limp, while knowing as a man of science that he doesn't stand a chance. He's not so much indulging in superstition as he is flirting with the dark sur-reality that creeps in every shadowed corner of the school.

The fantastic reigns freely there, the supernatural overtaking the natural in a seamless blur. Images of the still-born, drawn as they are from science, nevertheless have an otherworldly allure—truth really is more gruesome than fiction. Jacinto is described as “a prince with no kingdom,” destined to

live as a fairy-tale archetype and trapped in the mythical netherworld of the film's setting. *The Devil's Backbone*, in keeping with the superstitious significance of its title, casts the school as a veritable kingdom of the damned, a reservoir of social outcasts and revolutionary possibilities.

The building itself is a labyrinth of the mystical and the menacing, correlating with the frightening imagery that riddles the entire film. Santi's corpse lies at the bottom of a cistern, a memory suppressed in the school's unconscious. When his spirit rises, it's a visual demonstration of the return of the repressed. Early on, Dr. Casares describes a ghost as “an emotion, a terrible moment condemned to repeat itself ... a sentiment suspended in time, like a blurry photograph.” A ghost is everything we try to forget, but that somehow still manifests itself in immaterial form—the elusive horrors of the id are here summed up with the loosest and most intangible of speculations.

The cursed resonate throughout the film, from the history of the war itself to the stigmatized babies with their deformed spines. Most ghost stories present an afterlife in which the higher celestial powers are conspicuously absent. By the galvanizing end of *The Devil's Backbone*, we realize the film has not only politicized the genre, but also raised its stakes. The villain gets his just desserts not through trials of justice and law, but by way of violent retribution. The precepts of democracy are divinely mocked. The satanic title carries a twist: God is not only dead, but his sworn enemy now stands for the historically oppressed. ■

Defending Democracy an Activist Resource Kit available from PRA

The U.S. political Right is escalating its attack on a range of hard-won rights and protections. *Defending Democracy* provides:

- ✓ **Overview of the Right**
In-depth articles.
- ✓ **Organizing Advice**
Practical guidance for activists.
- ✓ **Resources**
Detailed directory of major right-wing organizations and those challenging the Right.

Order by mail, phone or fax or contact us on the Web

Political Research Associates

1310 Broadway, Suite 201,
Somerville, MA 02144
Phone: 617-666-5300 Fax: 617-666-6622

Cost: \$15, low income \$10 (includes postage).
Visa/Mastercard accepted. MA residents add 5% sales tax.

Web: www.publiceye.org

Classifieds

HELP WANTED

ORGANIZER NEEDED — The Chicago Joint Office of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and the Screen Actors Guild (AFTRA/ SAG) seeks an Organizing Director to execute organizing drives in the Chicago area involving broadcasters in the radio and television industry. Successful candidate must have outstanding written and verbal communications skills and a commitment to building the labor movement. Should be able to work independently and with a team; BA or BS required. Prior experience in the labor movement a must. Fluency in Spanish a big plus. Applications will be considered until position is filled; salary commensurate with experience; excellent benefits. Send resume and salary requirements to: Search Committee, AFTRA/ SAG, One East Erie, Suite 650, Chicago, Illinois 60611 Phone calls will not be accepted.

OCCASIONAL TRANSLATIONS between French, Spanish,

English. Competitive rates.
Phone: 773-522-8984 Email:
situationist@email.com

PERSONALS

Concerned Singles
links compatible singles who care about peace, social justice, gender equity, racism, and the environment. Nationwide. All ages. Straight/Gay. Since 1984.
FREE SAMPLE: Box 444-IT, Lenox Dale, MA 01242. (413) 445-8309; OR <http://www.concernedsingles.com>

HISTORIC REPRINT OF THE 1925 FREETHOUGHT CLASSIC... **SEXUAL OBSESSIONS OF SAINTS AND MYSTICS**

BY WILLIAM J. FIELDING

Penetrating historical narrative of the often strange sexual fantasies of famous religious and secular personages through the ages.

BOOKLET \$8.50 postpaid.

INDEPENDENT PUBLICATIONS
P.O. Box 102
Ridgefield, NJ 07657-0102



**Before you change the world . . .
Why not find out how it works?**

We call our basic course *Progress and Poverty*, because that's what it deals with. Why wages don't keep up with the cost of living. Why the rich get richer, and the rest of us don't. Why recessions and inflation seem unavoidable, and even in the best of times, millions of Americans can't find jobs. Classes in Chicago and other cities, also by correspondence or Internet.

Henry George School 312/362-9302
www.hgchicago.org

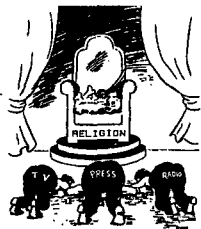


Cats & Peace

Steer your way through the new year with the 2002 CAT LOVERS AGAINST THE BOMB wall calendar. Cover cat Violet and twelve other fascinating felines welcome you to the new millennium. With daily information on cat history and peace activities of the past, plus dates of importance in the struggle for human rights and equality.

US \$7.95 plus US \$1.25 shipping.
Nebraskans for Peace: (402) 475-4620
PO Box 83466
Lincoln, NE 68501
website: <http://expage.com/page/CLAB>

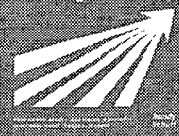
THEOLOGICALLY INCORRECT GROVELLING BEFORE MYTHOLOGY



To view an assortment of exclusive, insightful and enlightening literature which challenges the baseless theories of religion, go to:

WWW.FREETHOUGHTBOOKS.COM

Inciting Democracy



Inciting Democracy explores how we can overcome five key obstacles to creating a good society and offers a practical way to bolster and sustain grassroots social change movements.

"...an inspiring vision and concrete action plan..."
— Abigail Abrash, NH Citizens Alliance

Paper, 320 pp, 8.5" x 11", biblio, index, \$23.95

Order direct, save 20%: (800) 247-6553

The Vernal Project <http://www.vernalproject.org>

40 Topics Left Out of National Discussion — and Why

- Capsule Curriculum Can Change Education
- Billion A Day Trade Losses
- \$\$ Trillions From Air
- America is Reroyalizing
- 36 Others

View Table of Contents at www.dynapress.com

ISBN 0-942910-20-6
6" x 9" Paper 180 pp. \$10.95

TO ORDER www.dynapress.com (moneyback)
www.amazon.com
Books, Author Karl Roebeling



SYLVIA



Hopes that the Bush Administration would help New York overcome the economic devastation of September 11 have been dashed...

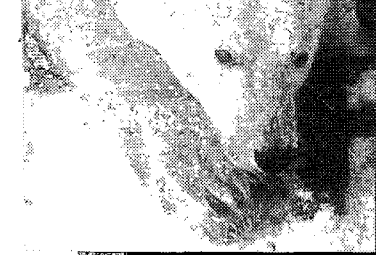
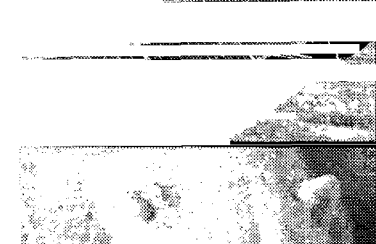
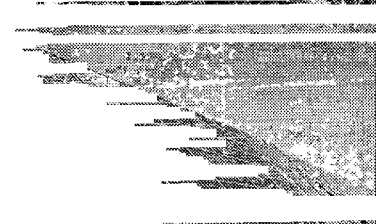
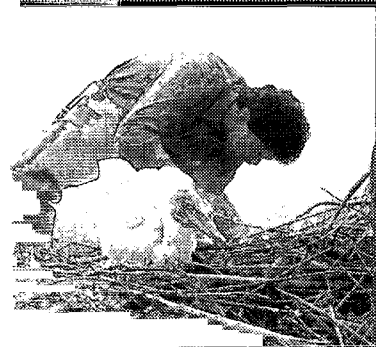
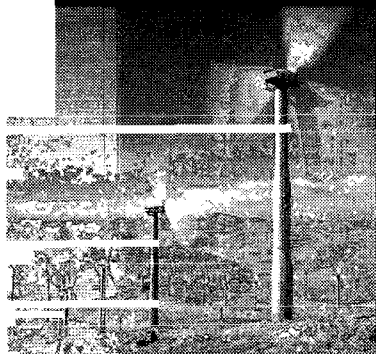
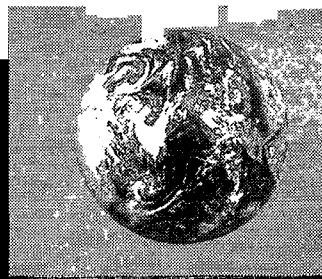
WASHINGTON is RENEGING ON its \$20 BILLION commitment to the city while giving BILLIONS to IBM, GM AND GE.



Like NAIL-BITING... A NASTY HABIT, but HARD TO BREAK.

By Nicole Hollander

If You're Concerned About the Future of Our Planet...



You Should Be Reading...

E/The Environmental Magazine

Each bi-monthly issue of **E** is chock full of information, ideas and inspiration that will empower you to make a difference for the environment.

E covers the big issues, like **GLOBAL WARMING**, the state of our **OCEANS** and **RIVERS**, **WILDLIFE PROTECTION**, and the impacts of our growing **POPULATION** — all with contact information to help you plug into efforts to turn the tide.

*Plus, our **GREEN LIVING** section will provide you with loads of practical ideas and resources to help you "green up" your personal life!*

- **Your Health** - Environmental impacts on health and wellness
- **Eating Right** - Food for personal and planetary health
- **House & Home** - Innovative green home products and solutions
- **Money Matters** - Personal finance with a green conscience
- **Consumer News** - Green industry and consumer product trends
- **Going Green** - Eco-travel trends and destinations
- **"Ask E"** - E's editors answer your environmental questions

Visit Us on the Web

www.emagazine.com

☐ **YES!** Please send me my **FREE TRIAL ISSUE**
of **E/THE ENVIRONMENTAL MAGAZINE**.

If it is all I hope it will be, I'll become a subscriber at \$19.95 for one full year (6 big issues), a savings of 16% off of the bookstore price.

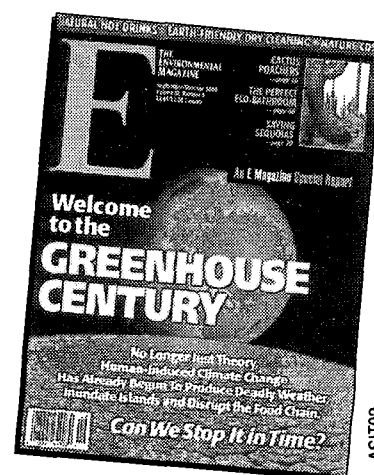
If **E** fails to meet my expectations, I can write "cancel" on your bill, return it to you and owe nothing. The sample copy is mine to keep without further obligation.

My Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Clip and Mail To: **E Magazine** P.O. Box 2047 Marion, OH 43306



AS102

The Great Game

By Naomi Klein

Since the release of The Video, Osama bin Laden's every gesture, chuckle and word has been dissected. But with all the attention on bin Laden, his co-star in the video, identified in the official transcript only as "Shaykh," has received little scrutiny. Too bad, since no matter who he is (he is most commonly identified as the Saudi *mujahedin* Khaled al-Harbi), he offers a rare window into the psychology of men who think of mass murder as a great game.

A theme that comes up repeatedly in bin Laden's guest's monologues is the idea that they are living in times as grand as those described in the Quran. This war, he observes, is like "in the days of the prophet Muhammad. Exactly like what's happening right now." He goes on to say "it will be similar to the early days of Al-Mujahedeen and Al-Ansar (similar to the early days of Islam)." And just in case we didn't get the picture: "It is the same, like the old days, such as Abu Bakr an Othman and Ali and others. In these days, in our times."

It's easy to chalk up this nostalgia to the usual theory about bin Laden's followers being stuck in the Middle Ages. But the comments seem to reflect something more. Bin Laden doesn't long for some ascetic medieval lifestyle, but the idea of living in mythic times—when men were godlike, battles were epic and history was spelled with a capital H. "Screw you, Francis Fukuyama," he seems to be saying, "History hasn't ended yet. We are making it, right here, right now!"

We've heard this idea from many quarters since September 11, a return of the great narrative: chosen men, evil empires, master plans and great battles. All are ferociously back in style. The Bible, the Quran, *The Clash of Civilizations*, *Lord of the Rings*—all of them suddenly playing out "in these days, in our times."

This grand redemption narrative is our most persistent myth, and it has a dangerous flip-side. When a few men decide to live their myths, to be larger than life, it can't help but have an impact on all the lives

that unfold in regular sizes. People suddenly look insignificant by comparison, easy to sacrifice in the name of some greater purpose.

When the Berlin Wall fell, it was supposed to have buried this epic narrative in its rubble. This was capitalism's decisive victory. Ideology is dead—let's go shopping. The end-of-history theory was understandably infuriating to those whose sweeping ideas lost the gladiatorial battles, whether it was global communism, or, in bin Laden's case, an imperialist version of Islam. What is becoming clear post-September 11, however, is that history's end also turned out to be a hollow victory for the U.S. cold warriors. Since 1989, many of them have missed their epic narrative as if it were a lost limb. Without ideology, shopping was just shopping.

During the Cold War, consumption in America wasn't only about personal gratification; it was the economic front of the great battle. When Americans went

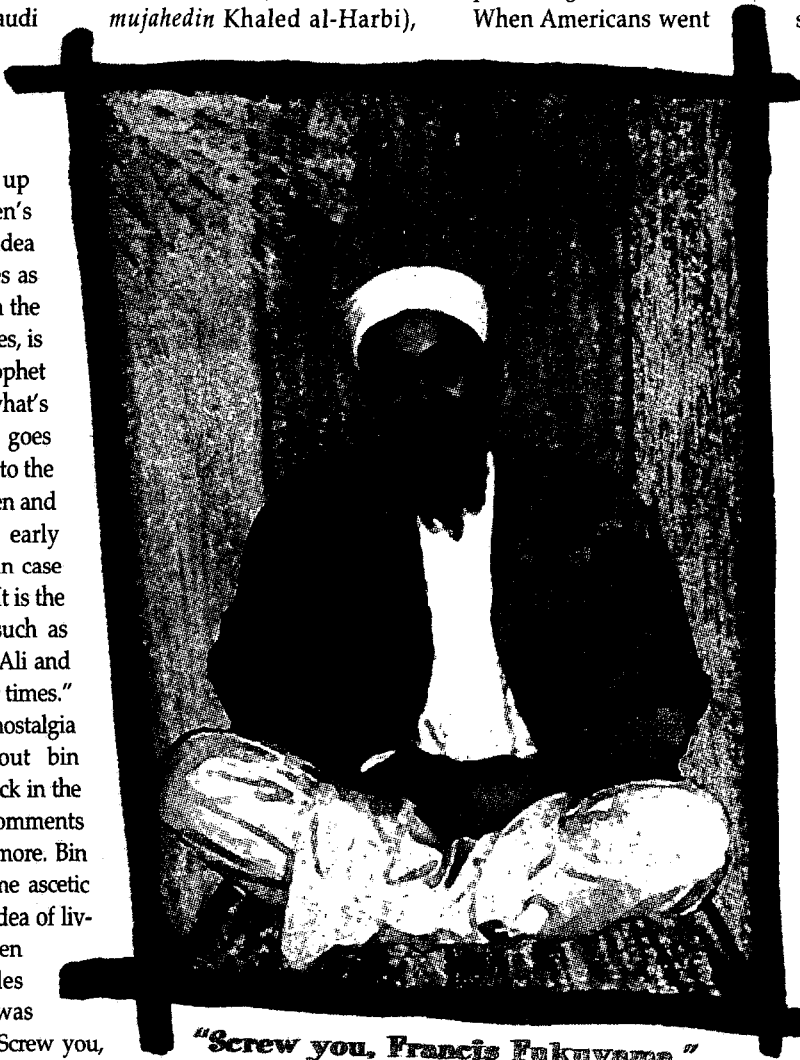
shopping, they were participating in the lifestyle that the Commies supposedly wanted to crush. When kaleidoscopic outlet malls were contrasted with Moscow's gray and barren shops, the point wasn't just that we in the West had easy access to Levi's 501s. In this narrative, our malls stood for freedom and democracy, while their empty shelves were metaphors for control and repression.

But when this ideological backdrop was yanked away, the grander meaning behind the shopping evaporated. The response from the corporate world was "lifestyle branding": an attempt to restore consumerism as a philosophical or political pursuit by selling powerful ideas instead of mere products. Ad campaigns began equating Benetton sweaters with fighting racism, Ikea furniture with democracy and computers with revolution.

Lifestyle branding filled shopping's "meaning" vacuum for a time, but it wasn't enough to satisfy the ambitions of the old-school cold warriors. Cultural exiles in a world they had created, disgruntled hawks spent their most triumphant decade grouching about

how America had gone "soft," become "feminized." It was an orgy of indulgence personified by Oprah and Bill Clinton.

But post-September 11, History is back. Shoppers are once again foot soldiers in a battle between good and evil, wearing new stars-and-stripes bras by Elita and popping special-edition red, white and blue M&Ms. When U.S. politicians urge their citizens to fight terrorism by shopping, it is about more than feeding an ailing economy. It's about once again wrapping the day-to-day in the mythic, just in time for Christmas. ■



"Screw you, Francis Fukuyama."